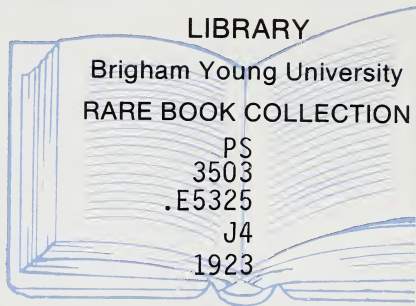


JEAN HUGUENOT

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT



James L. Hinckley
-11-9-1923-



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



3 1197 22431 5595

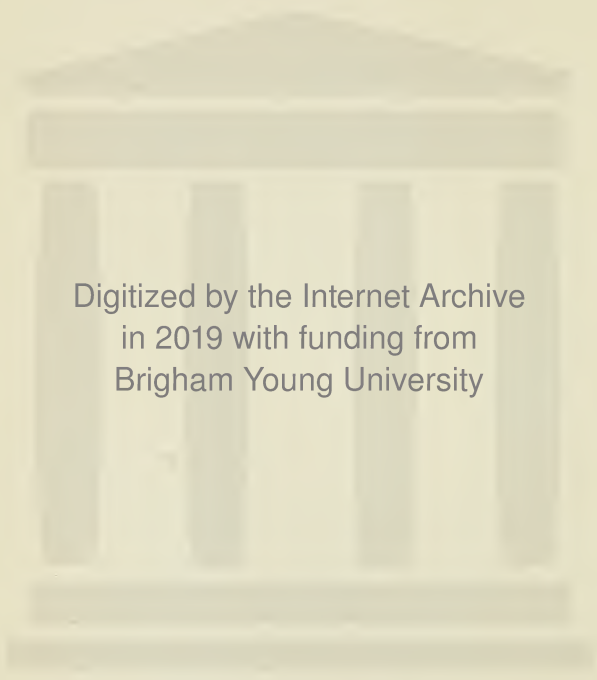
A COLLECTION OF
FIRST EDITIONS

brought together by

FRED A. AND FRANCES
ROSENSTOCK

acquired by the Library with the
assistance of the classes of 1942,
1948, 1951, 1960, and 1961.

Russel Young



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Brigham Young University

JEAN HUGUENOT

By the same Author

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIDE

JEAN HUGUENOT

BY
STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT



NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1923

Copyright, 1923,
By
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
First Printing July, 1923

PRINTED IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO LAURA
WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

	PAGE
HUGUENOT HOUSE	I

BOOK TWO

FOREIGN AFFAIRS	109
---------------------------	-----

BOOK THREE

"I FLING MY SOUL AND BODY DOWN"	181
---	-----

BOOK ONE—HUGUENOT HOUSE

JEAN HUGUENOT

CHAPTER I

I.

MAJOR THOMAS AUDREY was walking back along King Street to his house, about five o'clock of an October afternoon, just turning into evening.

He was an old gentleman, and so walked slowly, in spite of his cane. Besides, the long, steep, curve of the Hill always took his breath a little, no matter how mildly he teetered along, and the familiar pain in his left ankle warned him that a few slight, perfectly gestured pauses for calm admiration of the turning autumn leaves seemed more than necessary, if he were to accomplish the eight long blocks to his own gate without an ungracious hobble. He chose to make one of these gentle halts in front of the ruined garden of a large house, grinning with white pillars, where a child was throwing a ball against a brick wall worn down to the deep, warm red of an Indian stone pipe by days and the rains. Leaning upon his cane, with the air of conferring upon it a particular favor, he watched her, for a moment, with the dry, blinking contemplation of the very old.

Major Audrey was a palimpsest of seventy-six years of

memories of the city of St. Xavier and the State of Georgia—a yellow sheet of old paper, flaking at the corners, and written and crossed all over with a thin, slant, Spencerian hand. He could tell you the exact degree of relationship between the Cotters and the Cleves, down to Bob, the mulatto shoemaker and illegitimate great-great-grandson of that florid, first George Cotter who had come to America with Lord Baltimore. He had discovered a fifth cousinship with the Maugres for the boisterous Kansas wheat-king who had married Miss Willie Kenafee, to the horror of every good Kenafee between Savannah and New Orleans. The Speech that he made at St. Xavier Academy, every Jefferson Davis' birthday, was as crisp and changeless as beaten-biscuit, contained vivid allusions to Jefferson, Lee, Gordon and Senator Hoke Smith, and always ended, with orotund effectiveness, on the pathos of the day when "the Confederacy fell, bleeding, but, thank God, not broken, on the haven of her spotless shield!"

He was patricianly complete—a delicate, hardy vase that accidents of clay and firing had allowed to survive for the bewilderment of an age already caught in the wheels of its own machines. Moreover, he was irreplaceable. When he died—and it was a prospect he faced with the pithless equanimity of a gentleman—the rivet that held together the disintegrating remnant of the courtesy and memories of "before the war" would drop out of St. Xavier like the filling out of a tooth and leave it hollow. After him there would be tourist hotels, small branches of Fifth Avenue

clothiers and haberdashers dumped down like paste jewels in the middle of sleepy King Street, a litter of tea-rooms, a country club, the sale of family heirlooms to brisk, well-dressed people from the more discourteous side of Mason and Dixon's line. Meanwhile, the withering prophet of a small, fanatic church, he still held his diminishing congregation by tact and extreme good manners to the belief in a Second Advent of huge plantations, well-treated slaves, bell hoop-skirts, and a South like the fine, inimitable, fantastic thing that had flamed to pieces in the sixties like burning straw.

Now, as he stopped and looked at the garden, a golden leaf detached itself from a bough and sailed, shimmering, to the shapeless heaps of leaves, cherry with Fall or black-crackling with first frost, on the beaten, red ground. Ordinarily, he would not have concerned himself with so fugitive or natural a thing, but something in its slowness and hard, painted color touched him with a sense of the impermanence, certain as dwindling water, of the various things which he had loved in such a serene, cultivated manner; of the impermanence, even, of that own healthy, pink body of his that he had used and had pride in without ever saying so, as a gentleman should use and be wordlessly proud of the comforting, material possessions in the house of his ancestors. That body would blow into dust like a piece of burnt paper, it would come to pieces like a fan and corrupt incessantly, corrupt into a crudeness of life too brutal for his liking. The Old South was dying like a pine—already

there were only five houses, even on King Street, where one still had silver candlesticks at dinner. A hot, sad arrogance turned in him, for a moment, like an awakening child—in that instant of melancholy he felt almost young. If he had been "Beau Tom Audrey" still, he would have run into the garden and put the leaf in his pocket. As it was, he merely pushed open the gate and raised his old-fashioned hat to the little girl.

She did not see him—she was too absorbed in her game. Rhythmically she cast the ball against the wall in front of her with a motion as effortless and heedless as the play of the tall water of a fountain. Now and then the ball struck on some projection or unevenness of the bricks to bob off at a tangent and roll among the scattered leaves with a sharp, papery sound.

She was a little over seven years old, and as gracefully, hotly alive as a cub vixen. Her straight, clear, faded, blue dress did its best to regulate her, but it could not take care of her hair, which was down her back in a brown, thick flood that seemed, in places, as if it had been drenched in gold water and then shaken out again, leaving nothing behind, as a sign of that cleansing, but a few curlings and sparks of pure luster that shone in the sun like strands of a soft, bright metal. Wide eyes—brown as a current running over smooth, brown stones—a round, small, childish chin—the Huguenot nose, so proud of being so straight—a small mouth, "inferentially sensitive," thought the Major—the rather chunky body and skinny legs of her age—mercurial

feet—that was as much of Jean Huguenot as the Major could see.

Inside, she might be anything, the Major considered. The Huguenots had never been successful when they married Newsomes—they had tried it twice before Jean's father's time, and hardly with pleasant results for themselves or St. Xavier. It was a cross-fertilization that produced queer, maladroït sports—Seward Huguenot, who had invented a steamboat in 1803, run his model three miles up the Andalus river to win a bet with one of the Vereys, and then let it rot on the bank, while he devoted the rest of his life to rum-punch and trying to draw the fourth dimension—Nancy Huguenot, "the Blood Orange," as the slaves in the cabins had called her for the pistol-duels that had been fought about her and the color of her tawny hair. The Huguenots were decaying with the rest of the Major's St. Xavier—a crumbling decay, like worm-eaten wood. The house would go when the tourists came and the name with Jean.

The ball that Jean had been tossing hit against a corner, leaped, fell into a drift of leaves, and disappeared. The child began to spin around like a weathercock, looking for it. Again the Major raised his hat.

"Miss Huguenot!" he said, gravely. Jean came running over to the gate.

"Why, Uncle Tom!" she said, putting her face up, dutifully, for his kiss. "Oh, listen, Uncle Tom, did you see where my ball went?" Then she added, inconsequentially, "And, anyhow, I'm not Miss Huguenot; Aunt Eve is, and

she says if I try and put up my hair again with her hairpins, she'll wear me out!"

"She'd better turn you over to me, if she wishes the full proceedings of the law. I'll commit you—that's what I'll do, Jean, I'll commit you!" and the Major chuckled.

"What's committing, Uncle Tom? And will you do it with your cane or with your sword, when-you-were-with-Jackson-at-Second-Manassas?" She ran the last eight words together like one long name.

"It wouldn't hurt so much with your sword—not the flat part," she added reflectively. "And you wouldn't use the thin part, would you?" Her eyes were limpid with innocence. She could always tease Uncle Tom.

"Not on you, honey, not on you." The Major stroked her hair, as he did that of all the little well-bred girls he knew in St. Xavier. It gave him a certain bland feeling of paternity, without any of the latter's practical responsibilities. "But you mustn't worry Aunt Eve. She's mighty good to you—and there aren't so many little Huguenots she has a chance to be good to, now."

"Oh, she's good to me, Uncle Tom, she's so pious-good to me, I 'clare to goodness sometimes I just wish I was po' white, that's what I do! I can't tear my dress and I mustn't climb trees—and I can climb 'em better than Ricky Cotter or Stu Cazenove—and I've got to eat polite and never take more than one help or maybe two and never use any of the best words I know because Aunt Eve says only po' whites say 'em—and if I was po' white I could eat bacon-fat on new

hot-bread and sleep in my clothes and never worry 'cept about a licking and that's not bad—I kiss up to God I don't know what Aunt Eve's talking about, sometimes——”

“Now, Jean, Jean!”

“Well, she doesn't do that to you and——”

“Well, Jean, have you ever heard me say that I wanted to be—a hill-billy?”

The Major shivered a little all over at that phantom thought. Jean looked at him a moment, wide-eyed. Then she laughed from her heart up—a rapid, little brook of notes on an old flute.

“You'd be fine, Uncle Tom, you'd be fine! Oh, oh, you'd be just like old Ed Beeward with your whiskers and the way you walk! Oh, Uncle Tom!” and she went off again into merciless laughter. The Major flushed.

“You—you shouldn't say things like that, Jean. They aren't—nice things,” was all he managed to get out. But Jean went on, like the Litany.

“And you swear, Uncle Tom! You said ‘damn’ and ‘hell’ the other day, when you fell over the rug, and I heard you! And I learned all the things you said, and I'm going to say 'em! I'm going to say 'em to Aunt Eve whenever she starts talking down her nose at me, and if she asks me where I got 'em, I'll tell her you say 'em, too——”

But the Major was too thoroughly shocked to hear any more. With a suddenness that surprised them both, he reached over and took Jean by the scruff of her blue dress.

"Jean Huguenot, honey," he said, with jesuitical sweetness, "Jean Huguenot, your uncle's a mighty old man. But you just loose one word of what you've been recounting to him before your Aunt Eve and he's going to commit you so hard with the flat of his hand on you that you won't find pleasure in sitting down to your meals for three long days! You hear, Jean? You hear, Jean Huguenot?"

The child tussled in his hands.

"Turn me loose, Uncle Tom! Turn me loose!" she panted, kicking at him. "I have to go find my ball! Turn me loose right now!"

"Not until you tell me you're sorry. Not until you say you're mighty poorly and sick at heart for what you said about Uncle Tom and Aunt Eve."

The Major felt rather like a judicious archangel, passing appropriate sentence upon Cleopatra, newly-arrived and highly, fractiously young. But all his judiciousness fell off like a badly-fitting wig when Jean suddenly burst into a passion of tears.

"You—you *hurt* me!" she said, between sobs. "And I don't want to be hurt—I don't want anyone to hurt me, ever—and you're my Uncle Tom! And I hate you—I hate you like medicine—I hate you like cats!" and she tried to bite the hand that was soothing her, and then put her wet face in the middle of the Major's white vest and cried as if she had hurt herself to the bone.

She cried like a French actress—she cried like a rainy day—she cried as if the tears in her were as inexhaustible

and violent as the unbelievable cruelties of the world that had called them forth. Her hot, dirty hands made streaks all over the Major—she rubbed her face up and down on him for comfort until his vest was spotted like a leopard. And the Major, feeling as if he were trying to be kind to a cloudburst, was illimitably distressed.

He did what he could—he made speeches to Jean which, at any other time, would have made him fear that his brain was softening—but his promises, his words, his anguish were alike as ineffectual as trying to blow out an electric light, till Jean had had her cry out to her thorough satisfaction; and it was not until the damp symphony had diminished to a series of long shaking sniffs that he felt at all safe. He then attempted explanations—apologies, even—furious at himself for making them, but in so constant a terror that the weeping would begin afresh that all his dignity left him. Conversationally, he went on his belly like a worm.

Jean received the apologies.

“When I cry, I just cry, Uncle Tom. I’m sorry I cried—but you hurt me,” she explained; and his fingers itched to spank her, and stroked her instead. He reflected dolefully upon his youth, when he had thought women of moods attractive.

“Aren’t you ever going to be a lady, Jean Huguenot?” he growled in exasperation. Then, as the sniffs began again, desperately, “Because you are a lady—because you are a lady, Jean, a lady right now, and you’ve got to stay so—all the Huguenots always did.”

The sniffs stopped. The child lifted a face as mocking and drenched as a poppy after a thunderstorm.

"Dunno, Uncle Tom, dunno. Wasn't made out of dirt to be a lady, I guess, and don't want to be one, either, powerful bad. Aunt Eve's a lady, but she doesn't get much fun out of it, 'cept looking starched. You're nice, Uncle Tom!" And she kissed him as suddenly as she had tried to bite him, twisted out of his arms, and ran off to look for her ball.

Major Audrey stood looking after her, for a minute or so. The bright head shone in the fallen, ruddy glow—she was digging among the leaves with clever paws. As he gazed at her, in her light movements, in her thistledown veerings between tree and tree, in her last kiss and the hard outburst of tears before it that had left him grimy, she seemed to him to have no part at all with things kindly or comfortable or mortal, to have only the color and inhumanity of a leaf. He made a few dabs at the wreck of his vest with a handkerchief, gave it up, shook his head, and feebled his way along King Street to his house.

2.

Jean Huguenot was always rather proud of having been born, like Napoleon, a little too soon. True, she had not been delivered, like the impetuous Corsican upon a tapestry prophetically crowded with warriors, but she liked the idea of having been in such a hurry to live.

Later on, she sometimes tried to picture that birth-scene—patch it together, as she did most of Huguenot history, from chance words dropped by Aunt Eve and the vague,

fabulous, droning recitals with which Cecily soothed her to sleep.

The setting she knew well enough—Aunt Eve's room now. By an effort she could rejuvenate Aunt Eve and Cecily somewhat and place them in attitudes of exultation on opposite sides of the vast and gloomy bed. Her father she preferred to take from the portrait in the library—completed just before the firing upon Fort Sumter—a thin, hawky, delicate youth of seventeen with a long, black coat, a white stock, and an expression of the most innocent haughtiness, staring out between the pillars of a high porch upon a wide countryside, diminished past any laws of perspective in homage to him. This portrait Jean infinitely preferred to the only other picture of her father—a time-darkened photograph, showing him whiskered and burly, taken at the time of his marriage, some two years before his death.

The only personal memory she might be said to have of him was a vague but definite reminiscence of light-brown whisker—and when she grew up she put that down to imagination. And of her mother she had no memory, only a photograph even more blurred than her father's, which dimly presented a young girl with impatient eyes and a soft, sweet, wilful mouth, her hair dressed in a fashion that seemed strange.

There were other difficulties, too, with the birth-scene. Her father's portrait would not budge from its one fixed pose, it stared out of the window, solemnly and haughtily,

when, by all dramatic rights, it should have been kneeling beside the bed. And Aunt Eve and Cecily kept drifting back to their present ages unless she kept her mind on them. Yet, in spite of everything, the center of the group gave Jean a rich, exquisite satisfaction—her mother, completely clothed in the dress she had worn in the photograph, smiling, in bed, and beside her, Jean, the infant, a priceless Jean with gold curls and all her teeth, a Jean as nobly, conscientiously cherubic as a huge wax-doll.

And yet, for all that, she was nearer the truth, in some ways, than might have been imagined. Charles Huguenot had indeed looked out of the window, humming a little now and then to himself, while his wife, having borne his daughter, lay dying in the bed of Jean's daydream. Not because he was cruel, nor even because he was unmoved, but because he was fatigued. And now he had come to a time when emotion fatigued him more than anything else on earth. Now and then Sophia managed to look at him through the weakness that gathered upon her like a constantly increasing fog—once she smiled at the unconscious arrogance of his back—but even she, now that death was so close to her, admitted that what Charles was could not fairly be called his fault.

His five years of war had taken what energy he had and spent it—after that, there was no more to spend. He remained alive—Colonel Huguenot—a distinguished citizen—an affable, soft-voiced simulacrum that, in public, filled honorary chairmanships with an adequate grace, that, in

private, St. Xavier supposed, was busied with a "History of the Institution of Slavery from Biblical Times to the Present." In reality, busied with nothing, not even vice or genealogy. In reality, anxious only to avoid any possible chance of becoming more tired.

The wreck of Huguenot grandeur in the Civil War left the two surviving Huguenots, Charles and Eve, very nearly enough to live on. Under Eve's thrifty care, it might have been quite enough, but when Charles wanted a thing, he took from his capital to buy it—the simple economics of a child. He wanted it—that was enough—one of his few convictions that approached the violent was that God would protect a Huguenot. He lived thus, asleep, for more than fifteen years.

Then, abruptly, he seemed to wake. A belated passion attacked him. He had never considered marriage before—the thought meant fatigue. Now he fell in love with Sophia Newsome, when Sophia was seventeen.

Her photograph told the truth about Sophia's eyes. They were impatient beyond measure—impatient for experience, for grandeur, for all extraordinary things. Her impatience—her young, hot hastiness—occupied her, body and spirit, like Greek fire. In the end it destroyed her, for it drove her to marry Charles Huguenot.

Huguenot was still a great name in St. Xavier—and Sophia had never been out of St. Xavier. Charles Huguenot seemed to promise her the fullest satisfaction for her impatience that she could hope for, at the moment. His Indian-

Summer had made him suddenly grandiose—he was full of great schemes for reviving the Huguenot supremacy. He sent North for books, for machinery—he planned a new wing for Huguenot House, a consolidation of the various cotton-mills under his leadership, many dreams. He spent money—he bought Sophia a diamond ring.

Three months after his marriage the sudden, belated gust of his energy died away. He fell gradually to sleep again—a sleep unbroken by visions. The wing remained unbuilt, the cotton-mills unconsolidated, the new adornments of Huguenot House unpaid for.

For a few months Sophia tried first to coax, then to shame him to action. Then she stopped. It was useless, it only made her feel ashamed. Besides, she was pregnant. The child would be a son. He would take her impatient mind and his father's strong body and do all that she wished to do and could not.

Now the child was a girl, and Sophia was going to die. Something had gone wrong—herself or nature or the doctors—she did not know which and she was too weak to care. She was still impatient, but now only impatient for death. Death would cut clean off—she had never been any good at doing over a sum. It came out right or it did not, and this had not. She hoped her daughter would have her eyes. She was sorry to leave her—a failing sorrow. A certain gentleness came to her, near the end. It hardly seemed fair to tire Charles with the spectacle of so simple a matter as her

dying. She turned softly over on her side and died without disturbing him.

All this happened before Jean Huguenot began to have memories.

3.

She was conscious first of darkness and light, of heat and cold. Of food and sleep, and a shadow wavering on the ceiling, and bright objects held close to her, at which she stretched her hands. Of there being difference between things that were hard and things that were soft, of pains that, while they lasted, were the world, of being damp, of being dry. Of an object on a hard, smooth stick that, when shaken, rang—a pleasant, tinkling, jangling, silver-sweet, chatter of sound—a monotonous, a delightful gabble of jostling bells, on whose repeated burden her infancy, like a leaf on a silver ripple, hurried away.

Speech and walking came to her. In her first seven years she was neither unusually healthy nor unusually unhealthy. She had a ruddier color than most of her playmates and her hair seemed more living than theirs—it crackled like a cat's back when Aunt Eve brushed it in sultry weather—it felt alive on her scalp. But that was all.

She was not a strange child. She could play by herself for hours contentedly, but she played with other children a great deal. Her world broadened from Huguenot House as she grew. And yet, the farther away from Huguenot House her explorations took her, the more important it became.

Its high rooms, dim and cool, full of dead Huguenots' things; the careless and rambling garden; the smell of indoors, ancient, languid—a faint, indefinite mixture of floor-wax and leather and dying flowers and heavy rich stuffs grown a little musty from having been little-used so long; the wide staircase with the broad, thick banister; the black-marble fireplaces; the portraits; the withered Confederate flags above her grandfather's portrait; the sunny kitchen, smelling of flour and Cecily; the oil-lamps; the spaciousness; the hush, as of waiting, as of waiting always, in muteness, in a faded quiet, for some magnificent visitor who was to come, who never came; these things like the symbols of his faith to a zealot, like letters to a scholar, dominated her mind. Sometimes she rebelled against them—they were too calm, too time-worn, too set in their ways. She was angry and young, wishing angry, young things about her—for the moment. Then she repented, she recognized their antique grandeur as something finer than tarnish, bowed, was their servant. But always, in rebellion and submission alike, they held her, made themselves her touchstones of value, mixed with her thought and feelings as the mild air of St. Xavier mixed with her blood.

There was the rest of St. Xavier, beginning with King Street.

On King Street and on certain blocks of Vernal and Charlotte Streets, the old families lived, as yet, when Jean was little, undisturbed by tourists. More women than men lived on King Street—the proportion was almost two to one, for

the old families were dying. And there was scarcely a woman over thirty who did not dress in black—the heavy, voluminous weeds of Southern mourning. The houses of King Street were, most of them, like Huguenot House, large, faded, poor and proud. Audrey, Huguenot, Chillifer, Cotter, Popinal, Grandier, Cazenove, Flandrau, Crowl—so went the great names. Mrs. Crowl was the *doyenne* of King Street—a great-grandmother, ninety-five, she kept Emancipation Day as a day of rigorous fasting and sorrow behind drawn blinds, to her grandchildren's great discomfort.

King Street lay on the Hill—a mile from St. Xavier itself. It looked down upon all around it with the innocent, mild airiness of an old-fashioned lorgnette.

St. Xavier itself lived chiefly by its cotton-mills. They clustered along the muddy river—squalid erections of grimy brick. Child-labor and tuberculosis flourished. The working population was drawn from the Bottoms—a straggling, riverside colony of clay-eaters and cretins. The rest of the town was wide-streeted, with many trees in the streets. On Saturday afternoons Main Street was lined on either hand with country wagons and carts, the sidewalks crowded with a swarming, gaping multitude making brief holiday, negroes, crackers and poor-whites. As night came, the crowd got rougher—there were fights—especially in the neighborhood of Scratch Hollow.

Scratch Hollow was the center of the negro quarter, lying off to the side between the Hill and St. Xavier. It smelt—of licorice and greens cooking and grease and dirt and chickens

and "E-Z-E Strate—Guaranteed to Smooth Out the Kinkiest Hair." It seemed to Jean that there was always somebody shouting there, or somebody singing. Scratch Hollow interested her in spite of herself—it was so squallingly alive.

There was a tourist hotel—the Belle View—on the first crest of the Hill. Strange Northerners with hard, clipped voices strayed on its porches—the women in clothes Jean envied—the men either oddly brisk in movement and gesture or obviously invalid. They hired horses and rode or drove to queer places at unusual times. Some even attempted to play an unheard-of game called golf on the sand lots and scrub-pine behind the cemetery. Each mild winter there were more.

After St. Xavier, Jean had heard of the rest of Georgia—very large, if she had been drawing a map of what she knew, and pleasantly full of second-cousins and third-cousins and cousins who were just cousins, for no particular reason. Then the South in general, a South wholly unreconstructed, where, as Mammy Cecily informed her, all the Quality lived. "When I'se in de Souf, I wuhks fo' de Quality—when I was in de No'f, I wuhked fo' sech Quality as dey *is* in de No'f." The North was terra incognita—Damyankeedom—vaguely peopled by school-marms, rail-splitters, tourists, ex-bush-whackers and other people without manners or charm. That made the United States.

Of European countries she gathered from her reading and home-lessons the following particulars. England was green, except for London, which was foggy—the Tower of London

stood out of it like a spike. In France the people were always either dancing or drinking wine or cutting off each other's heads. Germany was full of black forests and lonely knights and things out of Grimm's fairy tales. There were many kind dogs in Belgium. Switzerland meant Alps and cuckoo-clocks and shammy-leather. They fought bulls in Spain and everybody wore red-and-gold clothes. She liked Spain best.

She had friends and enemies. Ricky Cotter was her friend—"he never thinks I'll cry when I'm hurt and he doesn't talk to me like a no 'count girl." Alice Crowl she admired—Alice Crowl could spit through her teeth. She had once said "Hell!" to the minister. Bill Flandrau was her enemy. They threw rocks at each other whenever they met. She liked that, too—it was exciting, for Bill threw straight. Bessie Grandier she alternately envied and detested—for Bessie's was the golden-curled, dolly prettiness and virtuous mien that made elders smile blandly upon and contemporaries long to pinch her. As for Uncle Tom and Aunt Eve—they simply existed, like Mammy Cecily—about them she had no definite opinions—they were too much part of her.

She had an ethic, wordlessly taught by every circumstance of her life. To be a Huguenot always, to keep her word, to be kind to servants, not to beg, not to sulk when she was hurt.

The first great hurt of her childhood came about thus

Musty twilight in the back garden of Huguenot House—

tired twilight, heavy with the spent heat of the day—twilight of faint blues and steamy grays. The blossoms of the magnolia trees seem to breathe all the vigor out of the air and sky, leaving nothing for body and lungs to feed on but their sweet crass scent, thick and sugary as the smell of spilled chloroform. It was the last half hour before supper and Jean Huguenot was hidden in the empty chicken-house, worshipping an idol.

Her god was small and unshapely and she had made him herself. In his first incarnation he had been a doll with a wax head and fluffy curls and skirts, but Jean had forgotten about him one day and left him out under the bake of an August sun till all his face ran together in a formless jelly of wax. Then she had put him into a pail of cold water and he had hardened again in strange spikes and corrugations of countenance and Jean had taken off his dresses and changed the sex of him in her mind, deciding that he should be her voodoo, as a certain dirty glass bottle full of herbs and red flannel rags and dried bits of flesh was Mammy Cecily's. He made a ferocious divinity, propped up on the chopping block altar with the first-fruits of the earth—six magnolia petals, two firecrackers, a piece of window glass and a dead mouse—spread out before him. Jean knelt in the dust at his feet. She felt a curious satisfaction in the fact that the ground hurt her knees.

"You haven't got any eyes and you can't talk but you're wicked like me and I love you, Voodoo," she began. "God isn't wicked, he's good, and I don't like God. And anyhow,

he's way off. I've brought you all the things I could—they's not much but I hooked the mouse out of the trap where he was dead when Cecily wasn't looking—and now you've got to do what I tell you. Oh, Lord, be merciful upon us and open our hearts!" she added in the high barley-sugar tremolo of the Reverend John Barham, Rector of St. Jerome's. She pressed her hands against her forehead, got up and curtsied, knelt down again. Ritual had always appealed to her. Besides there had been something in the interesting part of the psalter the other morning about David dancing before the ark.

"Well, I've got lots of things I'm begging about to-day," she resumed conversationally. Then, changing to what she called her 'religion voice'——

"In the first place, Voodoo, make Uncle Tom Audrey well. 'Cause he's sick and maybe he'll die and if he does there won't be anyone to tell Aunt Eve that what's the trouble with me, is I'm a Huguenot." The shadow of the Major's orotund voice hung queerly about the sentence. "Aunt Eve, she thinks I'm just a little no-account, that'll grow up po' white. And if Uncle Tom dies I won't have any friends here no more except Ricky Cotter. And besides, if he dies I can't hear him tell Jonas any more that he's the thievingest nigger in six counties, and that's fine. But if you do make him die let him give me the sword when-he-was-with-Jackson-at-Second-Manassas. Thank you, Voodoo, dear."

She stopped and waited. When she began again her tones had dropped out of politeness into fury.

"And you kill Charley Burke, you Voodoo, honey, or I'll put you in Cecily's bake oven till you clean melt away! He went and called me a cracker to-day and said his mother wouldn't let him play with me, I was so black-bad. You kill him and you mess his pretty suit and cut him up and make him holler and holler and holler," the culmination rose to a guarded but ecstatic shriek, "till he's quiet and dead and funny looking and they put him in a wagon and bury him in dirty ground. And when he's there you send him the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Put him in hell, my Voodoo, put him in hell!" The last words seemed to come out of her without her will, most softly and bitterly. Her hands were shaking—her eyes glittered at her god, at the place where his eyes had been and were now obscured.

"That's all I want put in hell except Greasy Joe because he's ugly and Still Seedman because he kicked Ricky Cotter's dog in the belly. But there is lots more things I want. Don't let Aunt Eve find out about the time I wore her best shawl to worship you in, my Voodoo, and the next time I get licked, make 'em do it soft. And let me find Father's books that they don't want me to read and have Aunt Eve remember I go to bed at nine now, and don't, don't send any more thunderstorms for a while, pretty Voodoo, because I'm scared of them. Oh, I'm scared of them!" she repeated passionately, her eyes open and bright with terror. "They come all the time and make me think about meeting my God and I don't want to meet my God and you're my

god, anyhow, Voodoo, and you can stop 'em if you like. I'm *scared* of them!" She shivered. She flung her arms about the chopping block and kissed the disheveled rag feet of deity incarnate. It seemed a long time to her that she stayed there with nothing but her fright and the feel of the cloth against her mouth and all around that faint strong rancid smell that means negroes everywhere in the world.

The spasm passed and she rose. This time she curtsied three times and smoothed down her dresses.

"Swing low, sweet Voodoo," she chanted,
"Comin' for to carry me home,
Swing low, sweet Voodoo-oo,
Comin' for to carry me home."

Her voice, untrained as a bell, mixed gently with the calms of twilight. There was peace in the house of Voodoo.

A little later two sharp pops told the chicken house that the firecrackers had been lit and had done their duty. The faceless god was hidden away in a feed-box. Evensong for that day was over.

The brown, high-ceilinged room was full of warm night. But at that it was cooler than the porch, and besides Miss Eve thought of night-air outside after eight o'clock as something as vaguely disreputable as overloud talk. She and Jean were sitting under the green reading lamp, she with an intricate tangle of crochet that grew under her hands like the cobweb of a thin and patient spider, Jean looking at the map of Africa in a spotted old atlas.

"What are you doing, Jean?" The voice came with almost no movement of the lips, like the rustling of frail cloth in a wind. The head did not turn—the dry skilful hands went on.

"Just studyin' around. Geography, Aunt Eve."

"Oh, I see. That's good. That's a good girl." It was hard to say that the voice had even ceased again—there was so little difference between it and silence.

"You will have to go to bed soon. It is nearly time."

"I know. I know." An impatient thrust of the head at the motionless figure. A promenade of a pink scrubbed finger across the sands of the Sahara desert. Under the breath, "Affika. Affika. Affika. Oh, dear Voodoo, don't let Cecily come just yet!"

Quiet, and the passage of minutes and minutes, so even-breathed, so soft-footed, so alike, a parade of lean elderly women in mourning, in slippers that made no more noise than the rubbing of silk against silk. A click of the crochet-hook on the waxed table as Aunt Eve put her work down for a moment to rest.

She did not lean back to rest, only folded her hands in her lap and sat without stirring, a calm exhausted figure in stiff black with little ruffs of white at the throat and hands. Life had known her once, against her will and with violence, as it knows the gentle, and fatigued her beyond aches with that knowledge. Then it had left her, subsiding slowly as sand sinks out of an hour-glass, chuckling back to its far depths, water shrinking away from a beach grown hard with the indifference of the beaten. Now she sat in her silences

arranging it, shells and pebbles and bones cast up by the sea, white or dark, as the game should have run, like a ghost playing patience with ghostly cards. At the moment she was trying to think of Jean.

There was life on the other side of the reading lamp, life like a possession of the body by burning spirits. She saw that life as she might have watched a display of fireworks with dispassionate, pleased regard. All that was necessary was that the sparks should not fall at random, on tinder or on her own dress. So she sat, like one of those black cloth housewives women used to keep pins and needles in—little housekeeping things with faces as expressionless as paper. She did not speak. It was too much trouble to speak now except in praise or reproof.

A small black woman, withered as a potato-root, crept into the room in creaking shoes.

"Miss Jean, lamb. Time you was goin' to bed."

"Is that you, Cecily?" Aunt Eve did not move at all.

"Yes, Miss Eve."

"Jean, you hear Cecily, darling?" The caressing adjective was tasteless. It would have taken such an effort to make it taste.

"Oh, Aunt Eve, can't I stay up just a second longer? Just a little, little second?"

"No, Jean." The words whispered like feathers from the strengthless peace of the other chair.

"Oh, Aunt Eve, Aunt Eve!" The life that was radiant had run over and clutched the knees of the life that had

radiance no longer because it was so weary. The face that wanted every dissolving minute of time for its own, looked with the intentness of the starving at the face that wished nothing at all but loneliness and the remembrance of something that had passed from it into speechlessness as color fades from a cloud. Aunt Eve put the hands away.

"No, Jean."

Slowly, with a rebellious dragging of feet, life was taken in charge by its black servant and led up the polished stairs to the room where it would be put to bed. Aunt Eve smiled faintly, a smile as faded and sweet as the dust in a jar of pot-pourri. The memories came back to her now that she was wholly alone, a phantom descent of birds on a bare tree, a litter of colored threads poured out on her lap for her to sort and arrange. She was wordlessly happy—all the bitterness had gone from what the mind must drink—only water, clear and tasteless and cool, remained. There was nothing left but the delicate task of appraisal of what she remembered and the infinite knowledge of where she had been hurt once and for what reasonless reason that could not matter any more. And upstairs, asleep, lay new life that she could not worship, but which she could watch in aloof enchantment till it was here no longer, as an old man watches without anger or heat or pity in the crackling logs in front of him the bright persistence of a single flame.

About three o'clock in the morning Jean woke and immediately cowered under the bed-clothes. Outside, the hot

dark sky seemed flattened down close to the earth like a quilt, and heat lightning flickered all about its edges, pale as Greek fire. The thunder rolled as if the heavens were one vibrating sheet of iron. Jean was terribly afraid of thunderstorms. Now, under the smothery comfort of the sheets, she prayed.

"Oh, God, forget what I said to Voodoo this afternoon! Forget I asked my Voodoo for all those things—it wasn't anything—I was just being outright bad. Oh, God, don't send me a chariot of fire like Elijah—I don't want to go to heaven and be burned up!"

The thunder padded closer and closer—a huge growling invisible animal, nose pressing through the window, paws feeling all over the sheets.

"Forgive me, God! Forgive me, God; I know I'm wicked as a cornfield nigger, but I'll try and be better. Forgive me this one time, God!"

A rending crash like the sound of a tree being split apart sent the last words up into a scream. For a minute Jean lay perfectly quiet, wondering if she were dead. She could stand thinking of being dead, it was the hurt that was sure to come first that she minded—a hurt like an immense toothache all over at first and then creeping down and making cold around the middle of her heart. When she could make her muscles move again she reached a hand down and felt her toes. They were chilly but obviously alive. A heretic, exultant joy ran over her like warm milk. God was not so clever after all. God had fired and missed.

She crouched up into a ball, arms over her knees, wondering if he would try again.

But the thunder merely roared and charged like a blind buffalo—smashing aimlessly about the sky, digging stupid terrible claws into the warm skin of the earth and never finding her. She felt safe and mocking and cool.

There were three more rapid crashes, toppling over on one another like falling houses. These chastened her for a moment but left her calm. By the sound they were farther away. God didn't know anything, it seemed. God must think she lived in Annisville. Poor God. Maybe he'd go and kill somebody in Annisville believing that it was her. She chuckled and then grew grave. That wouldn't be fair.

The rain had begun to fall, in big hesitating drops at first and then in fresh-smelling cataracts as if the bottom had dropped out of the sky like a burst paper bag. The scent came to her where she crouched—a clean smell of new water and wet grass. Gingerly as a turtle she put her head out from under the covers. The thunder grunted once threateningly, but she did not draw back. Besides she knew how little all its big talk meant now.

She sat on the edge of the bed, dangling her feet and smiling. Then she padded over to the washstand and got a towel, for body and night-dress were soaked with perspiration. She rubbed herself dry all over, as cleverly as a cat cleaning itself, took off the night-dress and threw it on the bed. The rain had settled to a continual drowning pour

broken in upon by angry yaps of the thunder, shuffling away now, its stubby tail between its huge shapeless legs, a discouraged animal.

When she was dry she waved the towel about herself and started to dance.

Her feet made intricate patterns as they thudded softly on the floor. Her eyes were absorbed, her body glittered in the darkness as if she were made of fluent silver water. After a while she began to sing a song.

“God sent thunder to *catch* me
God sent thunder to *catch* me
But he never *caught* me
An’ he never *caught* me!”

She stamped her heels like a cachuca dancer at each soft shout of the verb.

“God sent ole thunder to *kill* me
God sent ole thunder to *kill* me
But the darn ole fool never *killed* me
An’ the darn ole fool never *killed* me!”

The rain played tunes on its drums—hollow drums of wet soft leather. Her eyes twinkled at it, her feet twinkled to keep the time. Her mouth was round with her hymn. She danced and danced.

The chicken-house, for once in its life, smelled washed. Even now, when it was almost eleven o’clock, the air outside had no heat; was as cool and blue as a larkspur. Jean sat on the chopping block, her Voodoo in her lap. She looked at him with sad eyes.

"You've gone and let Uncle Tom die when I asked you not to, Voodoo," she began. "You've let him die himself and you let God fire thunder at me all last night and if he'd had sense enough to know where I was I'd be killed dead this morning, Voodoo. You look all right, Voodoo, but I guess you're mighty weasly when it comes to doin' the things I want."

She poked what was left of the stub nose of Voodoo angrily. The dishonored deity did not even squirm.

"Uncle Tom's gone and died himself, Voodoo, and I know you let him do it," she resumed. "And he was nice to me and talked so gentle and, oh, I didn't want him to die himself. Why did you? Why did you?" Passion came into her voice like wind into a tree. She shook Voodoo till his rags rustled drearily, but still he did not speak. She made her mouth firm.

"I reckon you're most of the badness in me, Voodoo," she said slowly. "An' I reckon if I chop you up I'll get rid of my badness, all 'cept the part I can't help because it's me. I'm going to chop you right here with this hatchet, Voodoo. You hear me, child?"

She paused for a long moment for an answer but the unsightly face of Voodoo was as blank as when it had first been melted and so put on the attributes of deity. She laid him down on the block—his legs stuck out over it—helpless, pitiably stiff. She looked at him and reflected.

"Oh, I loved you, Voodoo, my darling, darling Voodoo!" she said in one rapid and tearing cry and kissed him where

his mouth had been before she had made him a god. Then she settled herself to hatchet work and in two minutes there was nothing left of great blasphemous divinity but stuffing and cloth and bits of wax like candle grease.

Two funerals took place that week in St. Xavier. One was Major Thomas Audrey's, a lugubriously splendid affair with tottery Confederate veterans in uniform and the Mayor as an honorary pall-bearer and words about the Resurrection and the Life. Jean wept at that. But she wept even more at the other, which took place behind the chicken-house where Voodoo was buried in a candy box with such fearsome sacrificial honors as were his due. It was a strictly private but highly religious interment.

CHAPTER II

I.

THE passing of Voodoo marked the end of a certain epoch. The rest of her adolescence would have seemed normal enough to any observant fool. She grew out of short skirts into long ones, out of home lessons into school, out of "Reading Without Tears" and "Dotty Dimple" into occasional forays of discovery among the Huguenot books. She was never what is piously called "a great reader," but she liked to collect extravagant words, tales, personalities like new buttons for her button string.

She liked the Restoration Drama—chiefly because of names like Sneerwell and Lady Booby and Sir Politic Fustian. Martin Marprelate was one of the gems of her collection, as was the adjective "oviparous," which became to her a secret, gorgeous term of the deepest scorn. She liked the look of the title page of *Moll Flanders* and so, at eleven, horrified Aunt Eve by her firmly expressed intention of becoming a Public Bawd. Crapulous, harangue (pronounced haranag), Abishaig, Sir John Mandeville and Mary, Queen of Scots, were among her other treasures.

She peopled an empty blank book with an enormous family of paper dolls—cut out of old back numbers of "Godey's Ladies' Book," for the most part—the De Courcy-Jenkins family, headed by Albert Montillon De Courcy

Jenkins in a stern top-hat and ducal whiskers. Alice Crowl and she were unwearying in following the misfortunes of this proud tribe through long rainy winter afternoons and evenings. Then she lost interest in them, had a severe but passing attack of piety. She was going to be a great tragic actress (she had never been inside a theater), except for a short period during the Spanish War when she wore a brooch with "Remember the Maine" upon it in gilt letters and hesitated between being a new Florence Nightingale and an International Spy.

She was somewhat prepared for puberty, when it came—by reading, by talk. But for all that it shamed her, and made her angry that it shamed her so, against her will. She could not reconcile the facts as she learned them, either with the calm behavior of her elders or the allusions to something either evidently splendid or highly jocose that she came across in books. The joke she considered a stupid one, the splendor unmanifest. It struck her in her pride. Mary, Queen of Scots, and *that!* she thought, with a sniff.

Her mind was always a little prone to extremes and for a time she quite persuaded Alice Crowl of the duty and grandeur of reviving in themselves the tribe of Amazons. In fact, she once got as far as heating a flatiron for a preliminary branding ceremony, when Alice burst into desolate tears and begged to be let off. Jean acceded, with hauteur—the flatiron cooled as they argued—the project died—for, while Jean felt quite capable of being an Amazon tribe in herself, the fun had gone out of the idea. So, characteris-

tically enough, her first reaction to sex passed off in humor—but the knowledge and the shame stayed buried in her mind like the bones of an enemy who would not lie quiet there.

A time of languor succeeded—pleasant languor—a sunny laziness warm as Georgia spring. The clock of the days moved slower—she wasted the days—in formless, complacent dreaming—in speculation unplanned and idle as the wanderings of a puppy through long summer grass. Sometimes, shamefacedly, she imagined Princes—bright armor—strong arms. But the dream would never come right—she would always laugh or be afraid in the middle of the dream.

She began to observe herself, however, as she had never done before. She took notice of her skin, of her hair, of the clean, direct line of her nose, of the way her hands were made. She felt herself live, she knew herself grow and flourish, not Narcissa-wise nor like a flower in a minor poem but with a larger carelessness, a more tart concern. So a thorn tree might blossom—an apple ripen—a birch on a hillside feel itself quick with sap.

More than any recognition of beauty there came to her a sense of power, whence arisen and for what end she did not know, but power, intense and heavy with radiance and in her hands like a knife.

This power grew with her looks. It was recognized in the way older people looked at her, when they were talking about her and she was not supposed to hear—in the way boys showed off in front of her—in other girls' eyes.

She took care of these looks, therefore, as best she could.

Out of dreams, vague and disorderly as the broken colors of a sunset, out of the memory of an illustration in a magazine, and an innate temerity, she contrived this picture. A girl walking beside a young lion, her hand on his neck.

His golden hide glittered like new coin, his eyes were innocent and wild, the eyes of the first animal. His mouth was angry and beautiful. He was her powerful servant. She was half-divine.

She did not look at this enthusiastic picture too often—she knew that anyone else would think it silly, or worse, queer. But when she did look at it, it pleased her beyond reason—the thought of it cloaked her like a seed in golden earth.

So time passed toward her seventeenth birthday, when she was to put up her hair.

2.

She woke early on the morning of that birthday, for her heart was impatient. The sun was up, but barely—the air still held its brief, first freshness—the light had gray water in it. A mocking-bird sang.

It was none of these things nor all of them, nor the hurry in her heart that bade her get up, for after now she would begin to be a grown woman. It was sudden, liquid accord of thought and senses, with something added from nowhere—something that froze the moment in her memory forever, a

pattern of tiny crystals. It was happiness complete. It had no name. It had no beginning, no end.

She lay in her bed. Her body was clean and warm. Life poured upon it. She was Jean Huguenot. For no reason apparent, for no virtue or lack of virtue, through the rest of her life this moment would stay clear to her. When everything had been plain.

She never knew how long a time she lay there, quiet, unthinking. Sleep followed the moment—sudden, treacherous, delicious—sweet and heavy as the deep, first sleep of a child.

When she woke again, it was late. Someone knocked at the door. The hot sun of full morning lay in a shaft across her bed. She got up, pulled some clothes on anyhow and then stood, in solemn excitement, before her mirror. The mocking-bird had ceased, but out on King Street a convict gang was mending the road to the singing of their chantyman—a mournful song that had to do with yallah roses and the price of muh ba-aby's hat. To that mellow, desolate singing, creamy and forsaken, her hands sought and found, her hands coiled and piled on her unaccustomed head, for the first time, the gleaming, virginal casque of her woman's hair.

3.

That things were not quite the same after that may have been fortuitous. But Life is a fortuitous affair—or so Jean found it. In any event it was within the same week that she really began to notice Ricky Cotter.

4.

Three months later. For once the inside of Huguenot House is light. Gas and candles, flowers and music—music that has not yet developed the barbaric impatience of jazz—the smell of blossoms and powder and white kid gloves—and, through it all, music, music by the six jolly negroes on the little corner of the porch outside the open French window—the music languid and drifting as too-heavy blossoms bowed down by their own oversweet—music dripping like the sugar-sap from the bottom of a honeysuckle, music frail as light wind on the violins, music deep in the horn, a soft-shuffle clog over the banjo, calling Jean to have her hour.

Aunt Eve sits stiff in a corner, rigidly festive, even letting a twitch of pride come over her face when the other chaperons, baggy or withered, smooth or puckered up with fatigue, but all inextinguishably genteel, tell her, in the soft Georgia drawl, how pretty Jean looks to-night, Miss Eve. Aunt Eve knows that Jean is pretty—watches her through half-shut eyes, as she might stare in a piece of crystal too full of the sun to look at without a shield.

Alice Cowl is pretty, too, in her spare, bred way, like a champion trotter gone a little fine—Bessie Grandier is ruffled and lacy and edibly pink-and-white—Clarissa Maugre has fine hair and a mouth as mocking and thoughtful as a pansy—and yet, beside Jean, they somehow lack reality. An unconscious, invisible strength seems to pour from her like luster through deep water—she could dance

her slipper soles through, thinks Aunt Eve, with annoyance, and not even know at the end of it that her feet are bare.

The boys appear carefully-cleaned and unutterably dignified—they exude propriety, looking curiously pink and innocent in their manly clothes. They dance with energetic intentness—but this night of music humming itself to sleep and yellow candle-light on waxed floors belongs to the girls alone. It is the first social affair in Huguenot House since Charles Huguenot's death—and even little Tom Chillifer knows that the date is historic and submits to the discomfort of his first pair of dress gloves as he would to any necessary mutilation for the sake of becoming a pitcher like Three-Finger Brown.

The hours go by; cards falling softly on a table. Jean is always dancing—with Bill Flandrau in a wilting collar, athletic Bill—with Stuart Cazenove, a University of Georgia sophomore, dark as a gipsy and a faultless dancer—with Ricky Cotter, his face pale and set in carved lines that look absurdly older than the rest of him, as if somebody had fitted the life-mask of the face of an unhappy man upon him. Supper comes and goes—the dance is to last till an unheard-of one o'clock as a tribute to Huguenot House. The chaperons huddle sleepily in their chairs—tired turkeys sitting on a fence rail under an April drizzle. The musicians sweat—they stamp their heels to the music, drumming like tomtoms—their eyes roll—the tunes float out of them like bubbles, float on, float on——

"Oh, Lordy, I don't want it to stop—I don't want it to stop!—" breathes Jean to Ricky as they drift like confetti through the loose wreath of dancers.

"It can stop any time it likes for me! You're always dancing with Stu Cazenove!"

"Well, my wordy, Ricky, he's the whole best dancer in St. Xavier——"

"Well, I——"

Easy pity comes over her.

"But I'd rather dance with you, Rick."

"Ah, Jean, can't you come out on the porch a minute? Your Aunt's not looking. Ah, please, Jean, please!"

She tilts her chin a little and looks up at him. The face she sees is as drawn as if a wire mask were pressing into it, the eyes large with pain. In the moment something curious and merciful possesses her—she sees Ricky like a child, a child with fat legs, so easy to comfort, so easy to hurt. She touches him on the shoulder, caressingly, as she thinks she might touch such a child.

"You mustn't look like that, Ricky! Everybody'll notice."

"I can't help it, Jean. Please, won't you?"

Again that inexplicable pity—that rising of something deep in the mind that makes her see nothing else for the instant but the hurt child mouth.

"All right, Ricky. That door."

They swirl out on the porch. A cool gloom flows over

them. They reach the steps and she takes herself out of his arms.

"Do you love me, Jean?"

The voice is Ricky's, immature, uncertain, but the passion inside it that is so much too old for him forces its way through the words like a spurt of fire through the silk of a Chinese lantern.

Jean does not answer. The sky is very large and quiet and full of stars. Looking at it, there come suddenly upon her that feeling which is all youth with its aches and exultations, the stabbing delight on the other side of anguish that rises when the mind knows itself too haughty for the skull that contains it and the heart too great for the breast.

"Love me?" The words come with difficulty, as if they were almost unbearable to say. Jean hesitates a moment. Then she sees the child again—it has fallen and hurt itself and lies there, howling, and she must pick it up.

"Yes, Ricky."

Even under the stammering possessiveness of his kiss a part of her keeps thinking, "But I don't, you know. I don't." Still, the child is comforted. Besides, it is sweet to stand so—it is like sinking deeper and deeper into honeysuckle scent. The music grows thin as a gnat-song. She slips away from herself, farther and farther, down endless, descending curves of space and warm dark——

Suddenly she shakes herself loose, as she might from the weight of a dream on her body. Ricky is shuddering.

"Oh, God, Jean, I love you!" he says.

She begins to talk hurriedly.

"I don't know. I like you an awful lot, Ricky, but I don't think I love you that way. I can't tell. You're too doggone much of a *friend*. We're——"

"You aren't going to take it *back*?" Ricky's voice is the despairing bleat of a sheep lost in the snow. "You can't, Jean. You can't now. Why——"

She smooths her hair back into place again—becomes grave with an abruptness that surprises her. She feels a thousand years older than Ricky and as far away from him as a star in the sky is from its nearest star.

"I'm not taking anything back. But we'll see, Ricky."

She feels for his hand and presses it, detachedly.

"You act as if you were taking my pulse, that's the way you act! And a minute ago——" yelps Ricky, out of the bitterness of his heart.

"Oh, don't be a *fool*, Ricky. Come on back and dance."

She gets him back through the door, somehow, but his arms are savage when they start dancing again.

"I won't *let* you!" he says, and the couple next to them titter. The music stops. Stuart Cazenove deposits his partner skilfully behind a rubber-plant and swims up to Jean like a buccaneering crow, his eyes alight.

"Mine, I believe."

"Oh, *yes*," and Ricky flings off to find Alice Crowl.

From Cazenove: "What's the matter with the Cotter infant? Sounds as if he wanted to lynch me."

From Jean: "Oh, he gets so queer—thinks he owns people—I'm getting mighty tired of it, Stuart——"

From Alice: "That's the third time in eight steps you've murdered my best toe, Ricky Cotter, and I was raised a pet."

5.

Jean's ritual before her mirror that night—or, rather, the next morning—was briefer than usual. When it was over, she paused for a last look at herself. And people really thought Bessie Grandier pretty!

Her scorn was justifiable. The possession of beauty breathed from her like the scent of a lime-tree, even now.

The child she had seen was gone as if it had never existed, an extinguished wraith, a smoke-puff swallowed up by the air.

"I'm afraid not," she said, and smiled at herself. Her teeth were so white and even. "No, Ricky, I'm afraid not."

In her heart she knew herself reserved for quite another person than Ricky. Who he was she did not know, but he bore some resemblance to a combination of Napoleon, a medieval Christ and the Apollo Belvedere. Her eyes shut as she looked at herself. He would be so beautiful. He would be so wicked and yet so essentially blameless. He would be able to break her between two fingers—and he would be pliable as hot wax between her thumbs. Most of the time, not always. If it were always, it wouldn't be exciting. He might beat her. Not very often, though. And

certainly every other woman in the world would want him. And certainly they couldn't have him. She smiled again and crept under the covers to sleep like a healthy animal for ten hours.

Meanwhile Ricky, on his knees beside his bed, prayed God about her till his feet felt like snowballs and his mind began to entertain thoughts of suicide.

6.

Shiny morning on the Crows' front porch. Jean and Alice talking, over lemonades and a box of peanut brittle—a talk of scraps and patches, like sorting over a ragbag, from hot argument on the new style in sleeves to a merciless, young dissection of marriage in general and the cracked china of the Briggs' matrimonial difficulties in particular. Now and then the girls fence, idly, patting at each other with catpaws that prick, without breaking the skin. Each finds the other too valuable an ally to scratch, but neither can help this indolent mock-dueling. To these, Bessie Grandier on the run,—skirts swirling, baby mouth pursed up into a horrified button.

"Jean! Alice! Have you heard about Ricky Cotter? Oh, it's awful—it's awful!" all in one long gasp.

"What's Ricky done, got fired from school because he and Stub Early smoke real cigarettes behind Stub's carriage shed? I told him if Mr. Early caught them he'd lick the shoes off both of them—but he thinks he's a hard customer, that fool boy." Alice leans back in her hammock again for

more perfect laziness and sighs. "Want some brittle, Bessie?" The last words are a mumble.

"Oh, it's worse than that—it's worse than anything that's ever happened!" Bessie scuttles up the steps and subsides all over a chair like a punctured balloon, hand prettily against her breast to help her catch her breath.

"Oo, it's so hot. Oh, and I've run all the way from my house. Oo. Ricky's dying because he took the wrong medicine. Oo." She relapses into gentle puffings. "It's terrible. Oo."

"Ricky's *dying!*" Jean looks dazedly at Fate's plump messenger, beaming with excitement and the bright heat of the day. Dying. People die at night when it's cold. They don't die in the middle of the morning—mornings like this. Her hands twitch in spite of themselves. She hides them behind her back.

"Bessie Grandier, quit making a fool of yourself and scaring us half to death!" Alice's voice shakes in spite of its military sternness. Dying. It's only old people that die. They don't die when they're as young as you are—boys you've played with.

"Well, I guess you won't say I'm a fool or telling fibs when I tell you all about it!" Bessie is damply resentful, her nose shiny, her hair in moist yellow ropes. "It's about the horriblest thing that ever occurred in St. Xavier—Mother nearly fell down flat on her back when she heard it and Father couldn't drink his coffee and I've been getting her smelling salts till you'd think she'd smell herself away! I

don't see why people want smelling salts anyhow—I hate 'em. Anyway—” Bessie is perfectly ready to run on for hours, like a forgotten faucet, about everything but the subject. But Jean shuts her off.

“Tell me the truth, Bessie Grandier, as you hope to die, and tell it quick or we'll neither of us ever speak to you again. Is Ricky dead, now?”

The last sentence shakes and gutters like a candle flame in a wind. A little chill breath—cold as the cold at the very bottom of the sea—seems to frost the two listening figures into a rigidity of silence for a moment. Death, the creature that lived vaguely somewhere out beyond the world with God and all the other things that were only names people said, has suddenly put on bones and ghastliness and sat down between them, grinning like a dog. They cannot force him away. He is real now—he will never be anything but real and dreadful any more.

Bessie's story chirps on, like a sparrow's voice in a cemetery.

“No, he isn't dead yet, but the doctor says maybe he will and maybe he won't—*he* can't tell. They've pumped him all out with a stomach pump and given him whites of egg and mustard and water and everything else you can think of but he just lies there looking gashly, Mrs. Cotter's Harriet says, and he never says a word. But his heart's still beating. And Mrs. Cotter's pros—prostrate in her room and maybe they'll get a new doctor down from Atlanta to pump him

some more if Ricky lives that long!" She made her rapid *résumé* on a high exultant trill.

"He took the wrong medicine," she explained lucidly. "And they didn't know anything about it till they found him groaning and throwing up all over the floor. Mrs. Cotter's Harriet says it'll take a week to clean up the bathroom." Bessie titters pleasantly. She takes a sexton's delight in mortuary details.

"*What* medicine?" Alice stabs the words into Bessie like pins. Jean tries to speak and finds her throat is drier than paper and an invisible gripping force is doing something sickening to her heart. The porch swims in front of her as if she were seeing through steam. From a place as far away as the top of the sky Bessie's perky voice bobs on.

"Why, his nerve tonic! At least, it wasn't his nerve tonic he took—that's all right, it just tastes like tooth-paste—the doctor gave me some once. But he forgot to take it after dinner and went looking for it in the dark and there was a bottle of poison next to it and that's what he took. Poison!" She lingers over the word as if she could bite it like an apple.

"Oh, it's awful, it's awful—it's the awfulest thing that ever was. Mrs. Cotter's Harriet says his face turned green just like a lizard. She expects green spots will come out on him if they aren't pretty careful. Maybe he'll live, though—the doctor says he gives hope. The doctor doesn't see why he took so much, though, but it's lucky he did because it all came up right away," she adds with relish.

Jean hears herself saying, "Does Aunt Eve know about it, Bessie? If she doesn't I think I ought to go back and tell her. She might be able to help." The tone is oddly calm and formal—it is as if Jean had grown up completely in five minutes.

"Don't think so, Jean, honey—we heard first, of course, because Mrs. Cotter's Harriet's our Pearl's aunt. Well, *what* do you think of it? Mrs. Cotter's Harriet thinks he might have done it on purpose because he wasn't going to get promoted till after next term."

Bessie settles herself contentedly to hear the considered worst as, in twenty years she will settle herself, plumper but still unlined, with others of her sort to compare over empty teacups old wives' tales of the accidents that come with bearing and bringing up children. But Jean is halfway down the steps.

"Why, Jean, you aren't *going*?"

"I think I ought to tell Aunt Eve. Thanks for letting us know, Bessie." Jean walks slowly over towards the house. She will not run—she *will* not run till she is out of sight. The thing saying, "Murderer. Murderer. Murderer" in her ear, quite fast and steadily like a man dictating a letter, might stop for a second, if she found that there was anything she could do. She stumbles a little as she walks. She has never felt so shrunken.

"Wonder what ailed Jean Huguenot to run off like that?" sighs Bessie, comfortably, looking dubiously at the stickiest piece of peanut brittle before she inserts it in her mouth.

"Reckon she hasn't much heart, that girl—she used to be so sweet on Ricky."

"Oh, I reckon she has heart, Bessie, dear," says Alice, lightly enough. All the same her eyes are staring at the wall as if she had touched a dead man's hand in the dark. "But she doesn't slop it around much—" and then, seeing Bessie very blonde and puzzled, "You tell me *all* about what Mrs. Cotter's Harriet said, Bessie, dear!"

7.

Six months later, Jean came out of Huguenot House about four o'clock for the walk which she had taken for two months now at much the same time each day—a walk that was as lonely as dying. She could shut her eyes and see every step of the way.

Up King Street, mellow with fall, the leaves tingeing to apple tints, the tall-porched houses set courteously back from the road, drowsing like poor gentlemen in their ruined gardens. Past the Maugres, past the Audreys, the Cotters, the Crows, head up, eyes straight ahead; no matter who might be looking out of a window to turn back to warm comfortable rooms after Jean had gone by and say, "There goes Jean Huguenot, looking just as if she'd never half killed Ricky Cotter by her foolishness at all."

Past any people there might be, and make yourself look at them as if you didn't care a bit how their eyes got hard when they saw you. Speak to them without ever showing

you knew they only spoke to you, now, because they felt sorry for your aunt.

It was only nine blocks, that part of King Street, but all of them were full of eyes and whispers and people who had liked you before that thing happened, last May, so you mustn't hurry through it. To hurry was running away.

You had to grow yourself new skin to get through those blocks—the hard armored skin of a crab—fit a shell over your mind and push it down tight, so you could not remember or think about what other people were telling each other about. you. You could do it, though—with two months' practice. The shell hurt like an iron hat, but it kept the worst away. And, after the nine blocks, came dozens of houses that didn't count.

They belonged to Yankees, mostly, the next ten minutes, after King Street had passed into Auburn Avenue. All the houses were new and big and looked as if they had been made in one piece after colored pictures in a woman's magazine. Shiny doors with new brass doorknobs, bright as the large, clean windows. Inside the houses you saw furniture that wasn't stiff and historic, but new and comfortable—phonographs, sometimes—pianos—fresh magazines on a table—electric lights. The tourist trade had tripled in the last five years, the St. Xavier *Argus* said. Already the Flandraus had sold their place to a new hotel company that was going to build an Inn three times as big as the old Belle View.

This part of Jean's walk didn't hurt, but it didn't mean

much. It was like eating plain bread to take a bitter taste from your mouth. Only, sometimes you got stupidly excited, wondering what it would be like to go into one of those Northerners' houses and live all the rest of your life with people who didn't know it wasn't your fault that you hadn't murdered Ricky, and, if they did know, being strangers, probably wouldn't care.

You turned off from Auburn Avenue where it crossed Milliken Road. Then you went past Coney Island. That was three blocks of bungalows lived in by people who didn't count, either—young married clerks and foremen. It was Coney Island because it had been all built at once, like a ready-made toy village, and nobody drew the blinds down at night, and there was always noise and babies and phonographs, and nobody knew anything about their grandfathers. But everybody seemed to live all over each other's houses and the street, and quarrel, and hold hands, and do exciting things. That would be exciting, too, to turn into one of these people, and never have to care any more about whether things were common or refined. The common people always seemed to have a better time. Only you couldn't because you were a Huguenot, and that was the way you were made.

Then there were soft-drink stores and little grocery stores and butcher shops, and really poor houses. There was the Catholic convent, hideous in bright red brick, looking like a cotton mill that had suddenly got religion. A few sick-looking trees tried to grow in the bald yard. And the nuns

came out and walked in blue-and-white lines, like a procession of children from an orphanage, and every nun was exactly like every other nun.

Then the country began.

A long red road went between rail fences for three miles up and down—a rough, cherry-colored ribbon laid across a puffy patchwork quilt of umber and earth color. The ground was stripped and cold, now, as the body of a woman dying of hunger—the black scrubs of the cotton plants withered in it too crampedly for you to believe that they would ever bloom again. There were a few cabins with dirty children on the doorstep, children who called to you in thin, high voices; and, occasionally, a man in the fields, and horses, and a plow. But, in general, the road was deserted from four to six—you could look all the way to the smoke-dark line of pines above Miller Siding and never see so much as a lop-eared dog.

Every now and then, at times, you might pass a negro—slouching from somewhere to somewhere—and he would look at you as he went by, and roll his eyes. That didn't make you afraid, when you had a pistol inside your dress, a pistol Aunt Eve didn't know you carried. It was comfortable to feel the slick steel butt of it, though, if the negro looked back at you, after he had gone past. But you were pretty safe, in the daytime. Besides, you didn't care so much what happened to you, now.

Overhead, the sky had the hard, clear colors of winter. As you walked, and it grew later, the west would deepen and

deepen to the transparent green of green glass, to smoky red, to pale orange. The sky was so indifferent and clean and lonely. It helped a lot.

Sometimes, the colors seemed to seep through into your mind, and stay there, and make it fresh. They burnt out the hot tangles that covered it like sticky wax. They left nothing but a spare, exhausted peace, clear and bitter as the taste of vinegar. You felt them alter you till it seemed as if nothing had power over you, nothing could ever hurt you—that you would keep hard and shining and undestroyed as the cold sky, no matter what happened. That was better than all the rest, and made up for King Street. That was harshly, glitteringly good.

The walk out finished at Miller Siding. Sometimes the ticket agent was there. If he was, he'd talk to you about his job and how he hated it. That was comfortable, rather—to have him talk and swear and apologize for swearing, and never know or care who you were.

Then back, through the gradual dusk, a falling violet powder. King Street was easier, going back, because nearly everybody was inside their houses. It had been pretty bad, a month ago, when it was still warm, and all the crowd were out on Bessie Grandier's porch, playing around and singing. It wouldn't be bad again until April now. Maybe not then, unless spring came as warm and early as last year.

Back to Huguenot House, and dinner, and Aunt Eve never saying anything except polite questions and answers,

and Cecily looking like a sad rubber doll. Lessons and books till bedtime; and then wondering if you could go to sleep without silly dreams of the times before last May. You couldn't, always—but often you could, if the walk had tired you enough.

8.

Jean had not been prepared for what met her when she returned to St. Xavier after a summer in the small, deserted resort in the North Carolina Mountains where the Huguenots had gone for thirty years. The only other St. Xavier people at Pine Hill were the Briggs—the rest were remnants of once powerful clans of Kentucky and the Carolinas—it was one of those places that seem wholly populated by women in black, endlessly rocking on long porches. The Cotters had gone to Asheville as soon as Ricky was well enough, and his sentimental secret had seemed perfectly safe. Unfortunately Mrs. Cotter had discovered a lugubrious “Last Will and Testament” in which Ricky, after leaving Jean the money he had in the savings-bank, implored her not to think too ill of him for the suicidal manner of his taking-off. With that and a few incoherencies out of his delirium she pieced what she believed to be the whole story together. She was a slow, buttery woman, with a vast inert resistance to the adoption of any unusual course of action, but, once moved, that same inertia lent her the crumpling power of a glacier.

Mentally she devoted Jean forever to present vice and

future damnation and, as soon as Ricky seemed fairly normal again, proceeded to spread her version of the affair—a dramatic tragedy with Ricky as Marguerite and Jean doubling Mephistopheles and Faust—with the same, thorough care that she would have devoted to putting fly-poison about her house in fly-time. From her intimates it passed to the rest of St. Xavier and, as it passed, it grew. Ricky, the only person who might have cleared Jean's character among her own acquaintances—went to V. M. I. early in October and in his and Jean's absence the high court of the girls and boys their own age met, sat on the case, and excommunicated Jean forever with every extremity of circumstance the young delight in when they think they are being righteous. The first news Jean had of it was when she ran up to Bessie Grandier, the day after her own return.

“Why hello, Bessie dear, have a nice summer?”

Bessie looked at her with eyes as blue and unsympathetic as those in an oculist's sign. She felt she was being dignified to the full extent of her five feet six and juster than Solomon.

“I'm sorry, Jean Huguenot, but I'm not going to speak to you any more. We've decided not to—all of us.”

Jean felt as if a pink plush rabbit she had been petting had suddenly shown teeth and growled in her face.

“It's so and you know why. I won't mention any further details but it's because of what you did to Ricky Cotter.

We talked it all out and that's what we're going to do. For a year or until you say you're repentant and humble. Then we might. And now please don't speak to me any further for I'm not allowed to answer." Bessie gathered up her skirts and moved daintily away with the air of one avoiding infection. And Jean, left behind, felt dizzy and shaken.

Of course Bessie in her ire had gone a little too far, a fact painfully discovered when she proudly told her mother about it and that lady—a sensible woman and old friend of Aunt Eve's—promptly forced Bessie to an apology as profuse as it was insincere. Jean received the amends with cool politeness, complimented Bessie on the fit of her new dress in a way that stung, and thereafter took sedulous pains to see either around or through her when they met by chance.

The formal boycott was thus broken within two days of its inception—but an informal and more deadly one took its place. Thereafter all her contemporaries were careful to speak to Jean, as careful as they were to make her feel by invisible painful means that she was not wanted. The older people divided silently—on one side Aunt Eve, Mrs. Grandier and Miss Jessie Audrey,—on the other solid, implacable bulk of Mrs. Cotter, the Cotter connections, and most of the rest of St. Xavier. Mrs. Cotter resigned from the Daughters of the King, of which Aunt Eve was lady president, after moving a fulsome vote of thanks to their gallant chieftainess and expressing her deepest regret that important

private duties precluded her own further attendance. A sister-in-law and three best friends followed her. It was noticed that both Miss Eve Huguenot and Miss Jessy Audrey broke their rule of twenty years' attendance at the next meeting of the Daughters of the Confederacy—Secretary for St. Xavier, Mrs. John Carrington Cotter. So the feud progressed in the inaudible deadly struggle of two plants in a jungle. The only neutral on the Hill was the young Scotch Rector, and, being unmarried, it reduced him to a state of puzzlement frankly blasphemous.

Jean had been on the Academy Dance Committee for three years—it had been a foregone conclusion that in this, her last year, she would be elected chairman for the girls. The meeting was held in January and when she arrived at it, a deliberate five minutes late, the high babble of chatter that she had heard and smiled at grimly in the hallway stopped instantly. There was perfect silence as Jean walked to the nearest empty seat—it happened to be next to Bessie Grandier's and the latter wiggled as if someone had dropped a grasshopper down her back and turned the color of tinned salmon as Jean sat down. "I tell you, you just about scared all those people out of their clothes, Jean Huguenot," Alice Crowl told her afterwards with customary frankness. "Why, when you walked in I got one square eye at you myself and you were looking like a cross between Queen Elizabeth and the Angel of Death." The silence persisted, broken only by fluttered whisperings in the cor-

ners farthest away from Jean. Rose Coombe, a slight, serious, nervous girl whose impressive spectacles always forced her into the chair at meetings, rapped falteringly on the desk with the blackboard eraser that was her badge of authority.

"The meeting will come to order," she announced shakily. As the meeting was already as orderly as an expensive cemetery her words merely produced a terrified tittering squeal from a round-faced thirteen-year-old facing her.

"We will now proceed—we will now proceed to the further nomination of candidates—" Rose went on hopelessly. "There are three at present, Miss Crowl, Miss Grandier and Miss Cazenove. Are there any more names to be proposed? If not I declare—I declare these nominations closed." She ran the last words together into a hasty gabble like a tired judge pronouncing formal sentence of death. Jean's eyes were full upon her—even her glassy spectacles were no protection against that gaze. Rose wished that she could creep into the inkwell in front of her and drown in its contents.

Alice Crowl rose quietly from the back of the room where she had been sitting with her arm around Mary Lou Cazenove.

"I believed I had withdrawn my name in favor of that of Miss Huguenot," she remarked detachedly. The room broke out into muffled exclamations. "Oh Alice! Alice, listen! Listen, honeybabe! Al—ice, yo' shan't withdraw yo' name! Why we-all's going to elect you whether you withdraw it or

not—you would have been anyway, sho', if it hadn't been for that Jean!" A vicious little pipe came from Ricky Cotter's small cousin. "Aunt Emma says she's just the same as a murderess, Alice Crowl, and you've got no business——"

Rose rapped excitedly again for order, sending clouds of chalk dust over the row in front of her.

"You wish to with—to withdraw your name, Miss Cole, I mean Miss Crowl?"

"I sho' do." Alice looked at the stammering Rose with the scornful condescension of a small boy for a weeping baby. "And I wish to nominate Miss Huguenot in my place."

She looked about for a moment, smiled swiftly, sat down.

"Miss Crowl withdraws and nominates Miss Huguenot," stammered Rose. She felt her voice getting thinner and higher with every word she spoke. "We will now proceed to the balloting. Bessie, will you——"

"Pardon me, Rose, I mean Miss Chairman." This was Bessie, scrambling up to a point of order. She looked pinker and waxier than ever, but now with the affronted hauteur of a Pekinese. "I believe Miss Huguenot's name has not been seconded." She glanced at Jean from parliamentary heights—the glance she received in return made her feel as if in going upstairs in the dark she had tried to put her foot on a non-existent step. "Just because we ought to do everything according to the rules——" she added uncertainly. She looked at the blackboard for further

inspiration, but none came. "That's all." And she settled back into her seat feeling oddly weak.

"Yes, yes." Rose had lost all control of her voice now; it wobbled anywhere. "Miss Huguenot is nominated. Does anyone second Miss Huguenot?"

Dead silence filled the room like heavy wool. Jean sat with her hands lax, she was past caring. She should have withdrawn her name, of course, the minute Alice proposed it, but it had been too sudden. She couldn't now—they'd all just think she was afraid.

"Does anyone second Miss Huguenot?" It seemed to Rose that the pause had lasted long enough for her to become a centenarian. "If nobody seconds her she can't be balloted on, you know." She waited another geologic age. "We will now—" The chubby thirteen-year-old was on her feet.

"I second Jean all right and I hope clear through she gets it!" she squeaked. Then she fell back into her chair again, covered with bliss and a tearful flush. Jean had helped her with her algebra once because she looked so plumply pitiful and the child had loved her ever since with sacrificial devotion.

"We will now proceed to the balloting then," said Rose and sat down with a gasp of relief.

The papers rustled about—there were little conferences and sizzlings all over the room. Jean sat dumb through it all—she couldn't believe what had happened. Alice. Alice was about the bravest person she'd ever known. And

the most unexpected. And she'd never even thought of Alice—that way at least. She remembered now that Alice had asked her to come over a couple of times even after the boycott, but she'd taken it that Alice thought she was acquiring virtue and had frozen her as well as she could. The mail Jean had hardened about herself for three months crumbled from her like rotten cloth. She was horrified to find that tears she hadn't known she had possessed kept stinging at her eyes.

Rose Coombe announced the results in a husky treble. Bessie Grandier 12 votes, Mary Lou Cazenove 8, Jean Huguenot 2.

Jean congratulated Bessie instantly and then let herself be swept out by the rest, all talking it over while she stayed silent. But that hurt very little now. When they were outside she turned off toward Huguenot House. Alice, a little ahead of her, looked back, smiled and dropped Mary Lou Cazenove's arm.

"Hello, Jean honey."

"Hello, Alice." Mary Lou was walking away. Jean looked at her friend—the words were not easy. "Thanks."

"Oh, Jean, they've made me so doggone mad all winter—stuck-up cats!" She put her arm about Jean's shoulder. The rest went past, whispering, talking, laughing. It didn't matter. The two girls stood there and looked at each other and knew that they were friends.

"Look at Bessie—she looks as if somebody's just given her a case of Coca-Cola."

"Like the white pig-bank up in Bryant's window," said Jean rather brokenly and laughed. Alice patted her cheek.

"Coming over to-night, Jean? Maybe we could pull some candy."

"Reckon so, honey, reckon so. Now you run along 'less you want Aunt Eve to scalp me for being late when she's going out shopping."

"Oh, I'll come over to your gate with you."

"Race you."

"You betty."

They scurried over the grass together.

9.

Alice lost no caste by her action, rather gained it. And, gradually, Jean drifted back, a little on sufferance, into the heart of the small, compact circle that she had always ruled, when she cared to, with casual autocracy. But she was not a person to enjoy being publicly tolerated—her three months' solitary was hard to forget. She found her best times, now, with Alice alone, with books, or her own thoughts. Besides, the two things coming so close together—Ricky's attempted farce-tragedy and the ostracism that followed it—had shaken her more than she cared to admit. She had always felt safe in her world—completely safe, and a little arrogant, because all the good things of it came to her so easily. Now this was no longer so—she had to pick her way like a cat on a wet sidewalk among

prejudices and whispers and enmities—she hated the process.

There were boys, of course. But she knew all the boys so well. And, for the present, she wanted no more Rickys. Stu Cazenove rushed her, on vacation, she enjoyed that mildly, it annoyed Bessie Grandier and kept her own hand in—she had no stronger feeling. Her beauty was what it had been, but her power had retreated—or so she thought of it—it was not instant and urging for a time. She graduated from the St. Xavier Academy with no clear idea of what she was going to do. During the summer she idled, grew tired of idling. She decided that she wanted to marry nobody in St. Xavier. She decided that she was going North—with Aunt Eve's consent, if possible, if not without it—to work her way through college, to go on the stage, to do anything that promised adventure. Her mind was made up. She was Spartan—Amazon—aloof—serious—ready to conquer the world.

In bed, the first night after getting back to St. Xavier from Pine Hill she dreamed. A fragment of song drifted through her head.

“Oh, the Mississippi River it's so doggone deep and
I said deep and
I meant wide!
Oh, the Mississippi River it's so doggone deep and wi-i-de!”

That was the world. It was so deep and—so doggone deep and wide. And she had only seen a few eddies of it, as yet, after spending most of her life in a brown backwater, under a tree. Such lots to do yet, such lots to see and feel

and taste and hear and smell. She couldn't stay in St. Xavier—not for keeps—there was too much of the rest of the world, and all of it too interesting. The whole spinning world, from the pole to the other pole. She ought to be able to see most of it, before she died.

She fell asleep and dreamed that she was a magnificently foot-loose ant wandering over a large pink space full of paper mountains and grass jungles and china animals—and it was marked across its face in large, block letters, "All the Rest Of the World." Only, she had to hurry, because, if she stopped to talk to any of the animals, they would all turn into china Aunt Eves, and tell her to come home.

CHAPTER III

I.

WHEN she woke, though, it was to to go down and have breakfast alone. Miss Eve looked mighty tired, Cecily explained, and didn't mean to come down to breakfast at all—but it wasn't serious. It was the last clause that alarmed Jean. It seemed to her that, as long as she had lived, she had always come into the big, shady room, two or three minutes late, and with something undone about her dress, to find Aunt Eve sitting at the other end of the table, rigidly prompt. Jean hurried through her own meal with a pleasant sense of self-denial, fixed a tray, and went upstairs to her aunt's room. In spite of Aunt Eve's present lapse toward mortal frailty, Jean felt a little awed as she knocked and entered.

It was in this great, bright, clean room, black-and-white and severe as a memorial urn, that she had been scrupulously punished for all the worst crimes of her childhood with the flat-backed hair-brush on the dressing-table, and as scrupulously rewarded, with mandarin oranges that lived secretively in a sweet-smelling drawer of the grim, black bureau, whenever her vagrant behavior had touched a certain, definite, thermometer-point of 'good'ness. It was Dangerous Gard to her—she had never played here or run about here—only sat, a small, dumb figure of gratitude or repentance,

on one of the slippery haircloth chairs that were always trying to shoot her out on the floor in disgrace, looking at the black-framed family photographs on the mantelpiece with a conviction that they knew her too well to speak politely to her, much less be kind to her, but would probably dissect her last, least silliness and perversity with Aunt Eve, in low, courteous, scornful voices, as soon as she had escaped and run out into the sunlight.

But now the high, stately bed, no one had ever dared be easy in, looked ashamedly disheveled, and Aunt Eve lay in the middle of it, pitifully tired and small. Jean hated that bed the moment she saw it—she felt sure that it rebuked Aunt Eve severely for not getting up.

"I've brought you some breakfast, Aunt Eve! And the *Argus*—it just came."

The thin head lifted, languidly, from the heavy pillow.

"Good morning, Jean. Thank you. You should have let Cecily do this. I told her I wished no breakfast but the coffee has such a nice smell——"

She sat up in bed with an erectness that seemed only a mocking of her customary erectness. Jean thought how undefended she looked in her sensible night-gown with her white hair, fine as silk thread, done up in two tight little horn-like curls on her forehead.

"You aren't feeling badly, Aunt Eve, are you, really? Don't you want me to send for the doctor?"

"No, thank you, Jean." As she drank the coffee, touchingly greedy, Aunt Eve seemed to recover a little of her

motionless strength. "It is not at all necessary. I am merely tired."

The words had no appeal in them, but the face had. The whole line of the arm and body asked, unspokenly, for protection, not grudgingly or whining, but honorably, with a grave, aloof surrender. Jean wanted to run over and put her arms about Aunt Eve—to cherish her against her own breast like a doll, to pour out upon her, like rain upon a precious, withering plant, that life which possessed her own body with such excess. Instead,

"All right, Aunt Eve dear. Is there anything else you want?"

The mouth kept proud.

"No, thank you, Jean."

But Jean tiptoed out of the room as if it would never be anything but a sick-room, now.

2.

It was thus that Jean's life for the next eight months divided itself into two utterly separate worlds, as different as the light and dark sides of the moon. Sometimes Aunt Eve was well enough to be up all day, but these times grew fewer and fewer as the weeks went on. There was seldom anything so definitely the matter with her—she was merely melting further and further away from life, as light snow melts from the ground under the sun. She had had the stubborn resistance of a piece of fine, seamless cloth to the rubbing fingers of the years—now that cloth was giving

way, not in one particular rent or another, but all over, till it grew as thin and translucent as onion-skin. Even within three months she had greatly failed, and after that she seldom left her bed, but lay there for long hours, while Jean read to her without ever being quite certain that she was heard; or she merely looked at the walls or the windows or the quilt in a sort of bemused and painless annihilation of thought that seemed wise and childish at once.

She was seldom irritable, though often formal and precise—it seemed more as if she had ceased to care to bother with the things around her and so withdrawn into herself forever than as if she were dying. She acquired but one new trait—an infantile, invalid amusement in petty playthings, from jokes read out of the *Argus* to small, mechanical puzzles. This filled Jean with an overwhelming pity and kept her racking her brains to think of some new surprise for the breakfast tray each morning—surprises Aunt Eve received with the wholehearted gratification of a sweet-tempered child. There was pain enough for Jean in those last months—and yet, nearly always, she clung to a stubborn, recompensing conviction that Eve was having a better time, dying, than she had ever had in her life.

Aunt Eve had shaken off Duty and Responsibility—the two loads that had kept her back so painfully stiff for so long. She had the freedom of herself completely, now—a freedom, modest and calm as a monk's small garden—she who had hardened her heart and clipped her speech through years of taking care of the fools and the rash and the

childish. Now she even played, in rare snatches—she took a delight in breaking minor regulations whenever possible that charmed Jean like the gentle rebelliousness of a meek little girl.

That was one side of the moon—the great room with its smell of flowers and medicines—Aunt Eve, busy inside herself or placid with the passiveness of ebbing water—Jean's own voice, low and careful, reading Dickens and Thackeray and Charles Reade, endlessly, eyes watching over the book to stop when Aunt Eve fell asleep. One night she never forgot when nurse and patient grew excited together over the end of "The Cloister and the Hearth" and sat up three hours beyond the latter's bedtime, to finish it in the chill hush of one o'clock. Next day, Aunt Eve's temperature went up half a degree—but neither regretted the escapade. The two grew closer together in those months, than either could have thought possible—by March they had the intimacy in silence of two prisoners in the same cell for the same faith or two goblins playing together under the same shadow—and that, too, Jean never regretted in spite of the triple pain it brought at the end.

So that side—monotonous and cool and even as the life of a cloister, but with something of the same faithfulness of purpose that makes every ritual repetition of that life intense to the believer. The other side was the weather and the garden, eating, drinking, getting up and going to bed, a somewhat shadowy St. Xavier growing more and more unreal, like a moving-picture seen in daylight, as the

secret struggle in Aunt Eve's room grew more fervent—and, after a while, a highly fantastic young man.

3.

"They've got a new night clerk in the Belle View, Jean," said Alice Crowl, as the two girls swung down King Street to the Hill Pharmacy for double hot-fudges, after an evening spent in deciding that Bessie Grandier couldn't wear yellow without looking like an overblown chrysanthemum, that the immortality of the soul was probably invented by people who would rather go to Hell with their own little set of pet prejudices than relinquish them if it meant annihilation, that Nicholas was the nicest name a man could have, and that neither of them was going to have more than three children when they got married.

"A most romantic looking sprout. Bessie says he's got eyes like St. Paul's." She mimicked Bessie's sugary earnestness.

"Well, what are you aiming for me to do to him, devil-child? Siren him away?"

"No, but honestly you ought to see. He's got fuzzy yellow hair like a new chicken and a little yellow mustache and a *sweet* mouth. All the old ladies flow round him like mourners and tell him he reminds them of what Willie would have looked like if he'd lived to grow up, and want to make him slippers. And he walks as if he could dance right—you know how you can tell."

"Lead me to him, Alicia, honey, lead me to him. I haven't seen a pretty young man for an age."

A kind of swinging hurry in the blood had possessed Jean all evening. It was middle November, red-leaf and woodsmoke time, and the earth and the smell of it had the rich fertility of a woman who has borne many living children and is content to be again with child, sure as a bearing apple-tree of the life she has and the life she carries. There was a sense of completion and gathering in every touch of the air, a swelling ripeness of harvest-home. The sky had the soft darks and glows of a barn where reapers are dancing by lamplight. Jean turned to Alice suddenly.

"Like living, Alice?"

"Um," said the understanding Alice. "Makes you feel as if you couldn't die, Jean. Or ever grow old. Oh—*um!*" and she sniffed at the wind like a fox for mere joy of drawing it into and through her whole being as sand the sea. "Think we'll ever get old and sorry, Jean? I can't imagine——"

"Oh, not while we're like this—not while we're like this," Jean said breathlessly and then they let the night lap around them, like blue silk still sweet from lavender and cool closets, till they came to the little drug-store with the red-and-green jars in its windows.

After they had finished their sundaes and Jean had insisted on licking the spoon with a loud publicity because Mrs. Cotter was two tables away, they strolled over to the red

rambling mass of the Belle View. It had been St. Xavier's shame and pride when it was first erected twenty years before and everyone had said it was exactly like an (unspecified) French château, only wooden of course and so much more comfortable inside. And the glassy gorgeousness of the great gas-chandeliers in the main dining-room—The Banquet Salon, said the prospectus—had reminded old ladies who had never traveled in Europe of stereopticon pictures of Windsor Castle. But the gilt on the ceilings had tawdried and the cherry-colored plush of the upholstery faded—no one was impressed any more by menus in real restaurant French—the Belle View was aging stuffily like an antiquated Pullman car, and this was to be the last year of its supremacy.

Next season the Pembroke Crescent would open across the way; a concrete palace full of individual telephones, porcelain bath-tubs, electric light and imitation mission furniture; and after that the Belle View would be the old Belle View. Alice led the way into the tarnished lobby, and jerked an elbow into Jean's side as they turned towards the desk.

"There he is, and he really is darling," she whispered. "Just look at his hair."

The blond young man behind the black marble desk seemed as out of place as a heron in that atmosphere of costly, corrupting, bad taste. He was lean as an Iroquois hunter in winter and his face had the flat hard cutting contours of the face of a tomahawk, with high Indian

cheek-bones and a straight thin Indian nose. His mouth, Jean was to discover later, was astonishingly wide and tormented with humor. His hair was corn-colored, but hardly sleek—instead it stood up from his forehead like the crest of a hungry cockatoo. The silver noise that was in Jean's veins that evening began to hurry a little faster—she felt a curious sensation of lightfootedness and thirsty satisfaction as she looked at him, and yet she had a wild desire to laugh, he was so absurdly uncommon.

"He is—extraordinary," she whispered back, pinching Alice.

"Honey! And the things he talks to people about! He never seems to care what he says and he's read more books than anyone you ever heard of and they had an awful time and were going to fire him because one of the Yankees—a woman—thought he swore at her when she asked for her key, and it turned out he was only saying she was charming in French. But you want to hear him talk—maybe he'll say something funny—" and with the circumspect daring she might have shown in approaching a gorilla cage, Alice dragged Jean along to the desk. The young man did not look up from a little pamphlet he was reading, folded up in four to lie conveniently in the palm, until she had coughed twice. Then he slipped it into his pocket and turned to her.

"Yes?"

"Can you tell me if the Stearllys have registered yet?" said Alice, doing her best to look sweetly confused. "They are

friends we have been expecting for some time but we haven't had news of them recently."

"I don't seem to recall their having arrived, but I'll look in the register. The name is Stearly?" He spoke with precise artificial politeness, but his voice had an odd slurring quality that reminded Jean of the sound of an old banjo. She wondered if he could sing.

He consulted his various lists, moving with rapid gracefulness. His soft little mustache glinted boyishly as he bent over the pages and she noted that his hands were long and bent back at the tips in a sweeping curve. He shut the book with a snap.

"No—no one of that name has registered so far. Perhaps later—or we could telephone you as soon as they come—" He smiled charmingly. It was obvious that he was perfectly ready to produce Stearly's out of a vacuum if necessary.

"Oh, don't bother—they'll send us a note, I imagine, or telephone us themselves. Thank you."

"You're welcome," and as soon as she had half-turned away he had taken out his pamphlet again and was reading, his eyes scowling at the words as if he hated every letter of them but would show them all the same that he was stronger than they were.

"Well—isn't he?" This was back on King Street, taking time for the steep of the Hill.

"He certainly *is*," from Jean. "Doggone if he isn't. But what's he doing *there*?"

"God knows maybe but don't ask me, child, I've got no psychical powers about pretty young men. Bessie Grandier swears to goodness she thinks he's an Austrian count or something that had to make tracks from his own country because he'd committed murder, and Mary Lou Casenove's sure that he's an Indian chief that's gone and dyed his hair. He looks as if he liked himself pretty well, to me, but he's got the best manners of any Yankee I ever saw and that certainly is a relief. Too bad he's a night-clerk—I bet he could dance like sixty."

"And he reads?"

"Oh—everything." Alice waved her hand inclusively to denote all the culture of the ages. "Poetry and novels and socialism—think of it!—and French, too, though he has to use a dictionary pretty often, I guess. He used to read French novels in public when he was first there clerking, but the manager didn't think it looked respectable so now he only reads them up in his room."

"Well, he's funny."

"Funny as a minstrel show when he wants to be. There aren't any people named Stearly, you know—I just said that 'cause I thought we might get him to talk."

"Why, Alice, you doggone fibber!" And after that the conversation swung into what lies were allowable and what were not and ended in the conclusion that most were nearly always. But the hasty, glittering tune still ran through Jean's veins like bright water when she undressed that night; and when she went to sleep it was to have a torn

dream of a hungry cockatoo that pursued her over the roofs of the Belle View in grotesque, dancing bounds. But his feathers were soft and fluffy against her when he caught her, and on the whole she was rather more pleased than afraid.

4.

The next time Jean saw him was on an afternoon three days later when she was taking her second favorite walk—the one that started with the squalling heedlessness and dirt of Scratch Hollow as a sort of bitter aperitif and then turned into green Rachel Road, climbed a fence and a hill and ended in a little circle of bent pines, grouped like disheveled fiddlers, leaning down to play queer wooden music over something buried in the midst of them. The circle was the best place in St. Xavier from which to see a sunset—the formless patterns of the branches, like the leads of a stained glass window, cut the colors of the west into small burning pictures, and there was always a soft noise of wind in the boughs. Jean had taken off her right shoe and was standing on one leg like a crane, shaking out pebbles, when a voice came out of the dead grass beyond the fence she was about to climb.

“Hurt?” it said coolly. “Can I help at all?”

She was so startled that she nearly lost balance and sat down flat in the middle of the road. A scarecrow figure rose out of a pile of ruined hay on the other side of the fence, little burrs and stickers feathering its coat and

trousers. She recognized it at once by the thrust of the hatchety nose, though a cheap plaid cap pulled down to the ears hid the plume of hair.

"No, thanks—just pebbles—they *will* get into these blamed low shoes." And she tried to put on her shoe again too hurriedly, and hopped.

The young man took off his cap and came over to the fence. He had produced a knife from his pocket and offered it to her with a sweeping gesture, clicking out from among its complication of blades, scissors and nail-files, one of those little hooks that are supposed to be used for removing stones from a horse's hoof.

"Never know what may happen," he explained gravely. "Always carry it on purpose—though this is the first time I've had a chance to use this particularly foolish instrument. Don't you think it would go better, really? Can't tell about pebbles, you know. They lodge."

"Well, I'm not a *horse!*" said Jean indignantly.

He replaced the knife sorrowfully, obviously disappointed.

"Courageous but not wise," he said, shaking his head. "Not wise at all. Dangerous things, pebbles. Think how you'll feel if one works in. Farther and farther. Till they have to operate. Really—" and he made a motion again toward his pocket.

"I don't know why I'm standing here talking to you," said Jean inconsistently, and then "Pebbles indeed!" But she couldn't help laughing and the singular specter opposite her laughed too, throwing his head back till its

yellow featheriness looked mre and more like a plume.

"Find out. Come into my field," he said when he had stopped as abruptly as he had begun and they both stood staring at each other. He reached a hand over the fence. Jean took it—the feel of it was just what she had expected—thin, hard and alive.

She was over in three steps and again they stood staring.

"And it's my field anyway," Jean said finally with great decision.

The scarecrow shook his head.

"Was."

"Why was?" Jean fell into his clipped habit of talk.

"Like it better."

"That's no reason."

"Only reason for anything. Think of dogs. Like it better—know more about it—take parts of it away with me—" he rubbed his burry sleeve. "Don't get sentimental about it——"

"Neither do I!"

"Can't help it. Girl."

"Liar!"

He mimicked. "Such a *sweet* little field! If it only had geraniums——"

"It isn't, it isn't, it isn't!" Jean had forgotten that he was a night-clerk, that she had never been introduced to him and that at present he looked like a stage tramp.

"Don't you *see* it's just because the whole hill's so bare and starving and prickly that I like it? Don't you *see*

it wouldn't be any fun if it were all gardened up with neat little respectable plants? Good Lord, child, anybody with dirt and water enough can have a silly garden—but the field and the crooked trees up there and the nasty way they talk to each other—that's *me*, that's all. If you think I'm a greenhouse kind of a person—" she stopped, flushing suddenly and with the sensation that she was rapidly taking off all her mental clothes in front of him. But he merely nodded.

"No. You're a person. Sorry. Could see that from the first."

"Thank you." This had some of Aunt Eve's tone discussing an overcharge on a bill. He regarded her frostily.

"No sense in getting pœvish, you know. Makes you look silly—isn't good for your mouth to wriggle it that way. Persons don't mind being kidded. Besides—it was kidding." He smiled with the kindly tiredness of a man explaining to a child that fire will burn. Then he stretched out his hand.

"Come up and see our trees," he said. "The curtain's going up on sunset and we aren't rich enough to be late and rude."

They went, Jean hardly saying a word and feeling as if another person were moving her feet. He chatted along, she thought with some indignation, as if the situation were one to which he were well accustomed. When they got inside the circle of pines she noticed that he picked out

for her unerringly the one particular spot she had always chosen for herself.

It was a pale sunset—faint rose and citrus-yellow—as frail and artificial as a painting of brocaded cupids and lovers on an old fan. She remembered some of his comments later—"Watteau stuff" which had worried her because she was not quite sure whether Watteau was a color or not, and again "Now most of our friend's subordinates (that must be God), especially my namesake, would have splashed the sky all over with crimson and orange like a Spanish omelet. Blood and eggs. They'd never admit that this is harder to do. Look at that pink—it's like the pink inside a seashell. Great stuff! Must be Ithuriel running things to-night—I always thought he was this kind of a person from his name."

Jean pecked at the one crumb of fact in the play of the sentence. "Namesake?"

"Gabriel, of course—Gabriel, blow your horn. Name's Gabriel Keene."

"Name's Jean Huguenot, myself."

He repeated it, playing with the syllables.

"Not bad. Eve would have been better."

"My aunt's named Eve."

"Um. No name for an aunt, though. Aunts ought to be called Hepzibah. Or Harriet. Ought to be made to choose one or the other as soon as they begin to look auntish. Eve would suit you. Eve never was as holy as they try and make her out."

"Well——"

"She was passionate—beautiful—hated having to wear all those fig leaves, probably changed Adam's for poison ivy when he wasn't looking. She ought to have belonged to one of those sons of God that saw the daughters of men. Adam was a Presbyterian deacon."

Jean chuckled. "Doggone deacon."

"Oh, Adam. Poor Adam. Poor boiled cabbage." He went off on another tack. "And now I've got to go back and tell fat old women there isn't any mail for them. You coming here to-morrow?"

Jean hesitated. "Maybe. Sometimes do."

"Maybe I will too. Depends." They both laughed. He rose and stretched his long arms out into the bath of cool air that had followed the evening.

"Oh, God, that hotel!" he said. "So long, Eve." And he was gone. Jean lay still for half an hour after he had left until she began to feel pleasingly hungry. The pines and the sky seemed mingled in one blue-black blurriness—the faint stars had no distance—this one might be on a bough like a spangle, the other a million miles away. She thought contentedly. A night-clerk. Alice Crawl was the only other girl in St. Xavier who would think of talking to him. She would come to-morrow, of course.

If Jean had known enough about mythology, she would have put ~~the~~ next six months under the protection of Janus, that crossroads god with one face looking forward and

another looking back. Back, to Aunt Eve lying still on her bed and wasting a little more each day—the stiff room full of brown twilight—St. Xavier, and all known and familiar things. And forward, to what conclusion she did not know, but the road started with the circle of pines and the jerky talk of Gabriel Keene.

They met about three times a week, as a rule, if Jean was able to leave Aunt Eve alone in the afternoon—in the pines if weather permitted, if not in an abandoned cabin with a fireplace, half a mile or so away—the Opera Box and the Pigsty they called them. They talked incessantly, though Jean listened more than Gabriel—talked, with an ingenuous thirstiness that never seemed satisfied, of everything in the heavens above and the earth beneath and the waters under the earth. Twice Gabriel tried to make love to her, experimentally, she thought, for he seemed to drop the attempt in mid-air both times—at which Jean felt mostly relieved though slightly annoyed.

Gabriel (explanatory, quite serious, waving philosophic hands). "Nonsense! Silly nonsense! All this flap about war between the sexes—love 'em or hate 'em! All wrong. You can be friends without loving or hating. If you want to be. Now us. We're friends. We aren't anything else. We're——"

Jean (docile pupil). "Uh huh. Friends."

So it went, for a while.

He told her about himself, some truth, some lies, all entertaining to her. Of the Dakota town where he had grown

up. "Pop never could get over the time I took a prize for elocution. After that whatever I did was the fault of that kind of damfoolishness." Of starving in Chicago for a while; drifting from hotel to hotel; acting minor parts in a cheap stock-company till he was thoroughly convinced he could not act; developing an uncanny knack for picking up the tricks of technique of half-a-dozen different professions.

He confided to Jean that, until three months ago, he had carried four plays and a book of poems, all in manuscript, about with him. "Then I saw they were none of them any real good so I did them up in a package and mailed them to the Library of Congress without any owner's name on them—so that about finishes *that!*" and he chuckled. Then he went off on another tack.

"The last two weeks in Chicago after I'd lost my first job was the worst," he said. "You don't know what real hunger's like, of course—the point is, it wouldn't be bad if it only came now and then and hurt much worse when it did come, instead of just sticking inside you like a mustard-plaster all the time. It's so constant—gets your nerves so finally that when you see anybody coming along the street that looks as if he'd had a square meal, it isn't that you just want to kill him, you want to eat him too, you think how nice he'd taste with all that nice food inside him. Just as if he were a reed-bird stuffed with rice. It's like having a dull sort of stomachache that never lets up

and nothing you have the money to buy seems to touch it at all.

“Well, I’d spent about an hour in front of the window of a little restaurant looking at a cold fish. It was a French restaurant and they certainly knew how to cook from the smells that came out of the door and that fish was the most beautiful thing you ever saw. It was big and pink—it must have been a salmon, I guess—and all fixed up with little curlicues of fresh vegetable stuck on it like beauty-patches, and aspic jelly around it and scrawly black and white spirals in some stuff like *fondant* all over it like Chinese writing. Also it was only about three-quarters there when I started—it must have been very popular—and every five minutes, it seemed to me, a waiter would come along and, just as deliberately as if he were operating on a personal friend, he’d cut out a great gorgeous hunk of this fish without spoiling the artistic ensemble of its arrangement and put it on a plate and take it away, with a little white bowlful of mayonnaise in his other hand. I hated every man who had a slice of that fish and I hated that waiter more. I knew just how that fish would taste down to the last crumb of it against the roof of my mouth, and then how it would settle all over my stomach like a fat man and sit on my hunger and squash it till I wasn’t anything but warm and comfortable and happy.

“It didn’t seem to me that all the beefsteak and potatoes in the world would be half as good as that fish. I could shut my eyes and start tasting it till I hurt inside—and

then I'd open them, and there it was inside the glass, just as far away as ever and vanishing rapidly, too, and no way I could get at it unless I broke the window and fell on it like a dog. Maybe I thought someone would give it to me if I stayed there long enough—I must have been a little crazy, I imagine, for I remember I felt light all over and my feet were too big for my legs when I tried to walk on them. And I had five cents in my pocket.

"They ought to starve police-court judges for about three days before they let them sit on a case of petty larceny. I stayed there until nearly everybody was through dinner—and the fish didn't look as if it would last till next day. So I decided I'd go out and rob the first woman I saw that looked easy. And I'd have to make it fast, too, if I wanted any of that fish.

"So I did. There was a fat woman going up the street who didn't look as if she could run well and would probably have apoplexy if she tried to yell 'Stop Thief!,' and I followed her. I don't know why I picked on her exactly except that she had a double chin, and, the way I felt, a double chin was a deliberate insult. I couldn't get a chance on the street but she stopped to take a street-car and I could see that there was a little fat purse half-way out of the pocket of her coat—just like an orange on top of a Christmas stocking. I edged up to her, but the car came along and I had to spend my last nickel to take it. It was crowded, luckily, and half the people were reading newspapers. There never was a pleasanter set for a first crime.

"I went up beyond her to the front of the car and waited half-a-dozen blocks—just shaking with hunger and fear that I wouldn't be able to get away with it. Then I came down past her to get off and bumped into her hard, and my hand went over that purse and took it away as easily as if I were picking cherries. I took my time getting off, though I felt as if everyone in the car had their eyes sticking into me.

"Then I made myself walk all the way to a little dark alley—walk as if I were a gentleman taking the air. And all the while I had the deathly terror of God in me and every time I passed a policeman I thought I was going to be sick in the street.

"Well, I could hardly open the purse, I was so excited. I could feel that fish in my mouth."

He paused and grinned.

"I wrote down a list of what was in it afterwards, when I thought I'd send it back with a letter. There was a dirty handkerchief and three used transfers, a powder rag, two keys, a Canadian dime and three pennies. So I decided I wasn't meant for a crook. And next day I got a job and as soon as I'd drawn my first money I went back to the restaurant and asked for my fish. But he'd gone. I'll never have as good a fish as that if I hook up Leviathan."

And Gabriel sighed.

"Another time this Irish kid and myself were painting scenery with an old German bossing us who looked like a big bald eagle. He was the sullen kind—nasty-sullen like

stale dark beer and used to curse us out all the time for nothing at all, maybe because there was something wrong with his feet and whenever he painted he had to take off his shoes and socks and stand in a little tub of hot water to ease them. So the kid and I decided we'd fix him unless he got more pleasant. We started out by talking up the scarlet-fever epidemic that had just broken out all over the country—he never read the newspapers—and how we hoped that none of us would catch it because it was sure death in twenty-four hours. We played that up for nearly two days. And then when Diogenes was standing in his tub and too busy to pay attention we dropped some dry aniline dye in his hot water. Well, when he'd finished his job he got out and sat down to dry his feet. And the minute he looked at them, 'Gott,' he says, 'Lieber Herr Gott! I have the scarlet feefer!'—his feet were brick red all the way up the ankles—they looked like boiled crabs—and he started hopping around and praying in German and telling us for Himmel's sake not to leave him to die because he wasn't fit. Till he happened to look at his tub of hot water. My—then! But we'd left some tacks around on the floor so he couldn't chase us till he'd put on his shoes, and by that time we were all the way across town."

Besides talking he read to her, of course. It was a time when intelligent love-affairs progressed to the rhythms of "In a Gondola" and really intellectual ones to a muffled Celtic croon. Wilde, Yeats, Verlaine, Meredith, Hardy, "A Shropshire Lad," he introduced her to them all. He

read well, in a staccato way, and they would often spend the whole three hours among the trees in his reading to her while she lay back on the brown, crisp needles and listened to him in a relaxed and easy companionship as friendly as the smell of pine. After a while, he showed her his own manuscripts. They were bad, but not from lack of ideas, and he knew their defects. Of eventual success he was curiously certain and his single-purposed deliberate elimination of everything that stood in the way of it had a quality that impressed Jean as being both the oldest and the most enduring thing about him. They had a long talk once on the artistic future of motion-pictures, in which he believed fanatically.

"In a hundred and fifty years they'll be doing things like William Vaughan Moody's 'Masque of Judgment' instead of this cheap you-chase-me stuff," he ended. "And it'll be a damn big art. But I'll be dead in sixty years—I've got to do what I can."

"You'll do it."

"Of course. But it *takes* so long."

He crackled the thin dead pine-needles between his fingers.

"I may get run over by a truck to-morrow and then what'll I have done? I won't even have lived."

"You've lived more than I have."

"Not the best way—yet."

He looked at her steadily and she saw his face contort into painful lines. A queer silence fell upon them like the pause

in a duel when both fighters are tired. There was a soundless shifting of position between them that neither could have worded—it was as if both had been walking together over hilly country and had come in an instant to a sheer drop of rock at the end of the path. Their companionship had been as free as a house in a treetop and now suddenly there was a noise of closing windows and doors. If they liked they could stay in their house—if they liked they could go—the handles of the doors still turned—but they had played with Life and themselves as young dogs play with a ball and now Life considered them without heat or pity and began to score the game.

“Oh, hell,” said Gabriel sourly, “why did it have to turn out like this?”

Jean was too thankful to him for being frank to feel properly insulted.

“It doesn’t have to, Gabriel. It needn’t unless we want. I want to be friends. Can’t we keep it?”

“Try if you like. We can’t, though.”

“Why not?”

“You haven’t seen. You don’t know.” For once Gabriel’s mocking fluency had run off him like water. “It’s life. It’s the net you can’t chew out of even if you’re willing to break your teeth. It’s the dog in the manger. It’s hell. Why——”

“But as long as neither of us *want* to be in love with each other——”

And then they both sat silent again like people dazed af-

ter seeing into lightning. Jean's mind went round and round like a wheel creaking over stony ground. For the first time in her life she wished she had the spectacles and long nose of Rose Coombe. After a while Gabriel rose and she could see in his face that he had mastered for a while, as far as he was concerned, what both were squirming against like mice caught in a trap.

"Look here," he said, "we'll try. But only if you want to. And only if both of us can do it without scruples as to either of us getting hurt. And if we can't stand things, we'll tell. All right?"

"All right."

The mockery came back over him like a sunny covering.

"Kiss up to God?"

"Sure." And Jean wafted a damp and affectionate token at everything they were trying to defy in the blue sky.

They had good times after that—a visit to a circus where both rode around and around on the merry-go-round with the nursery excitement of children. They found prominent St. Xavier people inside the animal cages—the Indian honey-bear made a perfect if furry Mrs. Cotter—and later treated six scrawny little mill girls to a dyspeptic lunch of frankfurters, poisonous-looking ice-cream cones and pink lemonade that made them squeak with delight.

A day off that Gabriel managed to get one Saturday and that they spent in a sixteen-mile tramp through wet woods, smelling the spring like apple-blossom, hardly speak-

ing at all to each other, they were so comradely-content. The dedication of an altar to The Lack of a Sense of Responsibility inside the pine circle—an altar made of pine cones—thin blue fingers of incense waving from Chinese joss-sticks—the ceremonies veering between a parody of the Rite for the Ordaining of Deacons and Gabriel's loud chanting of what scraps he could remember of the choruses of "Prometheus Unbound." Green days, scattered like moss-agates on the gray silesia of Jean's life with Aunt Eve and medicines, days whiter than spray when life was a music as frail and passionless as the tune of water running over deep grass, a couple of days when the friendship they had, seemed wholly deep-hearted and as solid a toy to roll between them as a hard-skinned golden fruit. . . .

They passed—though they would endure for hours—even sometimes for all the hours in a week the two were together. And then there would be other times when Gabriel was tired or Jean irritable—or times merely of silence that had nothing to do with fellowship but was thuddingly expectant as a dog waiting for food—the silence of wires strung too tight against each other before they break discordantly.

And all the time Jean's physical beauty throve intensely like a fire fed on wax. At times she came very nearly loathing it for it seemed to be something beyond her control or will or knowledge—a burning dominance that she could no more shake off than her skin and that was now busy breaking the most liberal acquaintanceship she had ever known to bits with as little concern as an avalanche has

for the ground it erases. And at times she came very near Narcissa-worship to see that inescapable garment of hers so triumphantly complete in every curve and color and line. She was healthy as she had seldom been and often she had a quaint sense of necessary fulfilment in the gradual destruction of her friendship with Gabriel—it was all very well for the ugly to be sisterly, but the larger the beauty the larger the demands it must make for complete adoration, and Jean was not one of the kind of people who hang a new sword up on the wall.

As for Gabriel—he alternated, in private, between a hunger so simple and large it seemed more part of him than his bones and fantastic bursts of humor when he saw life in the terms of a third-rate epigram trying to be smart. Experience gave as little help as philosophy and talk less than either. Every time he came back from an afternoon trip with Jean it was with the sense of exhaustion of a juggler who has been keeping a dozen plates in the air at once, and he would settle into the chair behind his desk, wonder when the next train left for anywhere but St. Xavier, decide grimly to take it—and find himself when his work was over fighting like a spoiled child at the interminableness of the dozen or two dozen hours that had to pass before he went to the pines again.

The best way of helping them pass was by writing—so he would sit for unrestful hours at a time trying to put Jean into everything from a sarcastic triolet to an ode in the manner of Francis Thompson—and “Eve,” the new

poem that was to tell about her forever, grew like an unweeded garden. As a consequence he slept little and ate oddly and his nerves began to fray like string. Still, at times, he moved in a stinging intoxication where every sense seemed new and exquisitely fine, like a man who has drunk the pure ferment of wine. And the strength died out of the year as liquor dies from the mind and returned again as the two balanced against each other or fought or craved or were friends. February passed—March—April——

It was the end of April when the whole fragile structure of repression that had held them up so insecurely collapsed like a piece of bad scaffolding. They had met as usual about three in the afternoon and known the minute that they had seen each other that this was to be another day of false laughter and uneasy reticences. Gabriel took a wad of scribbled paper out of his pocket as soon as they sat down. It would be better than wondering what on earth they were going to talk about, at least.

"I finished that Eve thing last night," he said sharply. "Want to hear?"

"Oh, yes—guess so." Jean propped herself into the hollow of a pine-trunk and looked up through the boughs. It was a mingled sky, not rainy but crowded with white, large clouds. When she half-shut her eyes the sky was broken between the shift of the branches like scattered pieces of blue-and-white Dutch tile, deep cobalt, deeper specklessness, the patterns changing like the stir of a pile of white feathers

against blue cloth. The air was silk against her lips, silk and cool. Gradually, as she listened to Gabriel's jerky recitative, the tiredness and worry slipped out of her—she grew drowsy yet more warmly and largely conscious, as if she were lying in bed at ten o'clock of a cool summer morning with the sun streaming over her. She paid no particular attention to what he was reading but heard it without effort, without thought, with only an indolent joy in his being there and her being beautiful and that they were both alive.

He had begun nervously—the poem was not a good poem but it was the best he had done and, as he warmed to it, even the most crippled lines seemed to walk straighter and held up their heads with something of an angry ecstasy. At first he had been anxious, merely and humbly, that Jean should like it—as he went on he became so absorbed in the thing itself that he did not particularly care.

And, after a while, Jean lost her sleepiness and began to listen intently. Gabriel's entire unconsciousness of her—he was not even looking at her any more—did what his consciousness so far had failed to do—the whole poem was a declaration of love as naked as marriage in Eden—as Gabriel read faster the circle of pines seemed to fall outside of the world that had hesitation and clever talk and St. Xavier in it. Jean was alone in a wood before the beginning of the world where love took his desire as innocently as a panther and the rustle of his feet behind her made her afraid and idle and happy. She tried with one vehement effort to recover kinship with St. Xavier—the effort a sleeper

makes to escape a pursuing dream. Then she gave up, and the invisible forest came closer and closer about her, like a falling sky, till she lay breathless under its leaves.

Gabriel finished the poem defiantly, his head still buzzing with the rhymes. It left him empty and with a sense of something broken past mending, but, at least he had said what he wanted to say. Then he turned to Jean, and saw the change in her face, and the next moment his arms were clumsily around her and their mouths met in a kiss as certain as hunger. It lasted a long moment and was sweet. Then Gabriel took his arms away from her and stood up.

"We *can't*," he said. "We *can't*," in a voice broken to pieces. "O God, we're too different and we only think we're in love with each other and it's too late to change things now."

Jean was rocking to sleep on her forest branches still, but a breath had passed through the leaves and left them cold as paper. Gabriel began to talk rapidly, walking up and down. At first she was too dreamy still to hear what he said, but a name jumped out at her suddenly.

"I'm leaving for New Orleans Monday," he was saying hurriedly. "There's a friend of mine down in Panama, working on the canal—boy I lived with in Boston once—says it's the biggest thing that anybody's pulled off yet and more fun than a three-ring circus. So I'm going. I knew we couldn't stand it much longer and now it's happened. If I were a fool I'd marry you, Jean, and that would just about ruin us both.

"Oh, it isn't that I don't love you—I love you so much it'll be like dying to go away from you and I'll carry a dead piece around with me as long as I live. But I've got something else to do—and so have you—and we haven't enough in common not to smash inside of a year. You think you could stand being married to a night-clerk, maybe—or a scene-painter or a garage repair-man—and live in two rooms in the East Side with nothing to do but cook meals and wash clothes and wish you were dead whenever it's summer because it's hot and the streets stink to Heaven and wish you were dead some more when it's winter because we wouldn't have much money for coal and you'd have to stay in bed to keep warm. And besides." He fought for words—"and besides I want to keep you this way.

"Oh, I know I'm a fool and a liar and not even worth your throwing away but I know what I want to do with myself and if I married you I couldn't because I'd have to make money and make it quick and lots of it because I couldn't stand your being poor. Or else I'd have to let you be poor to do my own work—and I couldn't work that way either, I'd think about you too much.

"I want to keep you beautiful and like you are now—that's the way you'll always be when I think of you if I go away. I want to be able to go away from you and say—there's the best thing I ever saw and I didn't spoil it for either of us—I left it—I didn't take it—and now it's perfectly remembered and better in memory than it ever would have been real. I guess it would be different if you were in

love with me—if I was sure of that. But you aren't—it's just that you've never run into anybody clever before—you'd think you were for a time, maybe, and then you'd wake up and hate me all the rest of your life because you'd be tied to me and I wouldn't let you go. I wouldn't let you go, God damn it!" He shook. "I love you too much to let you go if I once had you. I——"

But Jean had risen also. She knew dispassionately enough how the truth was hurting him, but at the moment there was nothing inside her but anger. She could feel that anger rise in her like tearing heat—she would have liked to hurt the shaking creature opposite her until it screamed.

"That is quite enough. I quite understand. You—*nigger!*"

She threw the silly insult at him as she might have thrown a stone, with every bit of her strength. Then she turned and started walking down the hill.

He followed for a while, expostulating, explaining, but she marched as if she were carrying a flag. At the fence he stood watching like a lay-figure while she tried to climb it dignifiedly and swore viciously as her skirt caught and tore on a nail. He did not laugh—they had both gone far beyond humor. All the way back to Huguenot House she could see him there in her mind, standing in the field with that disjointed look of a broken manikin about him.

The next four days Jean devoted to nursing Aunt Eve with a savage thoroughness that alarmed her patient and

trying, quite unsuccessfully, to keep what had happened buried where she could not think of it. Meanwhile she received a number of bulky letters from Gabriel—frantic epistles ranging from long philosophical expositions on how impossible it would be for them to marry to infantile appeals for forgiveness and reinstatement on any grounds she chose. She read them all through, half with a ritual feeling of self-flagellation, half with something of the detached interest a scientist finds in the muscular reactions of a vivisected frog. The last letter was eight pages of sheer begging for a meeting at the pines Sunday night and closed with four lines from a poem of Housman's that had suited the mood of both when they read it together.

"Therefore, since I go to-morrow,
Pity me before.

In the land to which I travel,
The dark dwelling, let me say——"

Then the letter broke off and ended with only "For God's sake, come! G. K."

Jean smiled, thin-lipped, as she read it. Poor cockatoo! You didn't forgive. Let him hurt. Then she remembered his dismembered pitifulness the last time she had seen him, and again the uncanny pity which she had felt for Ricky the night of her dance and which was so much stronger a part of her than she knew, came over her. Perhaps, after all, it would be better to see him. A mean little flame licked up in her—how well she could punish him, if she did.

The note had said nine o'clock but even when Jean had her hat and coat on and was walking out of the door she told herself she was not quite sure that she was going to meet Gabriel. But she watched her feet take her toward the pines without looking for reasons.

Cecily was sitting with Aunt Eve, who seemed a little better this evening though the doctor had given no hope at all of her living longer than two months more at the most. Cecily had fussed a great deal, Jean thought, about her going out at all—a mill-girl had been assaulted by a negro a few days before in Scratch Hollow and the race-antagonism that simmered always like a witch-broth between the negro quarter and the rest of St. Savier seemed ready to boil over into violence. Jean listened to Cecily enough to put her pistol inside her dress when the old woman was not looking, and skirted Scratch Hollow itself, taking her time so as to be at least half an hour late at the pines. As far as she could see, the negro quarter seemed quiet—few lights were on in the houses—and she had to pick her way carefully, shivering a little, for it was a moonless night and had turned a little chilly after sunset.

She stumbled into the circle, the dark pressing down on her eyes like a bandage, stopped, stood listening. She had expected Gabriel to meet her below at the fence—and now she could not see three steps in front of her and there was no sound to tell her if he were there or not—only the soft broom-like noise of pine-boughs moved by light wind and, half a mile away, in the direction of Scratch Hollow, another

noise, a curious steady grumbling, rising and falling like the sound of an argument in a foreign language when only the tone of the voices is caught and the words seem meaningless. As she waited, this echo-like sound grew shrill in a burst like distant cheering, stopped as if a hand had been suddenly forced down over the mouth that made it, and was followed by two sharp pops like the explosion of a couple of toy torpedoes.

Then something moved from the trees in front of her, dim and shapeless as a creature made out of fog, and, before she had time to say a word, Gabriel was holding her as if he would never let her go.

Perhaps it was the setting that betrayed her—she had come intending to be angry enough. It was not that she grew sorry for any of that anger. But, at Gabriel's touch, it became suddenly of no account, and only pity and wonder that he should have starved so long for what seemed so little to her, so easily given, took its place. There was no happiness for either in their kisses—but there was no satire. It was a beaten lovemaking—a rainy comedy—but it had beauty, and the grief of beauty like the color of a ruined leaf—and the sorrow in it was as faithful and gallant as a man dying for a cause already lost—the truest thing that either had ever known. Pretty Delight had left them—but there were regions where Delight could not be and live, and it was one of these they inhabited, for the single, unreturning moment—a bare, wasted country, desolate as winter moonlight but peaceful as the hands of a dead child, for the flesh

had stopped its meaningless whining and the spirit was a free ghost, now.

In the heavy darkness, as they comforted each other without any words, Gabriel ceased to be a man, for Jean—he was a voice, a nearness, a warmth in her own mind. She felt as if it were not him that she held but another part of herself, dear as a sister, separated from her since the beginning of things and rejoined to her now in defeat, when even defeat itself did not matter any more, as it does not to the dead. She was ready to give all that he wanted with the indifferent charity she would have shown in sharing her last bit of bread with a fellow prisoner shut up in the same cell forever. And he was ready to take, without thanks or protestation, but with the same look on his face, if she had seen it, of the companion taking the bread. There was neither desire nor sacrifice any more—in the desert in which they lived these things blew by like the patterns of sand, as sterile, as idle. There was only need, and the truth.

So they clung to each other, like shadows cast by a lamp, and progressed toward their bitter inheritance. And then, suddenly, their chilly peace was broken in upon.

Jean felt Gabriel release her. They listened, hardly breathing. The noise came trampling the road at the foot of the hill, a noise of men's voices talking, of men's feet moving together, but it was neither disciplined nor casual. It was a pulse as steady as the throb of a savage drum—

and though Jean had never heard it before she knew it instantly. She saw little pictures—the school-room in St. Xavier Academy when she came into it, the day of the Dance Committee Election—the time she had watched half-a-dozen small boys stamp the life out of a garter-snake and a prickling had gone up through her hair at the intent fear and fierceness on their faces and the excited snarl in their puppyish voices as they called on each other to “knock the old devil endwise.” The noise was the noise of a mob, and, even as she and Gabriel waited, it began to flow over the fence and climb the hill.

“Here,” said Gabriel, hoarsely, “we’ve got to get out of this. They must have caught that nigger.”

He pulled at her hands and she rose, though her legs felt like water.

“If they aren’t on the other side—” said Gabriel, and cursed, whiningly, as he fell over a root. For a moment both were in panic—the trees seemed getting in the way on purpose, shutting them in like spikes in a cage that is squeezing together. Then they were out of the circle. Jean looked back once, felt her strength go out of her, suddenly, and fell on her knees.

The mob was crawling up the hill like a huge beetle—bunched together compactly in a swarming, insect-like mass. Bobbing torches split it up into blots of black—blots of yellow—where the light struck a face it showed small and naïvely inhuman as the face of a doll. A fat man led it—a fat man with a black silk handkerchief over his mouth

and some light, glinting chains coiled around his arm—Jean could almost feel him puff as the hill took his wind. His coat was off and he was sweating—he seemed the only human figure about the nightmare procession to Jean, and that he was so human only deepened the nightmare. He was such an ordinary fat man, with his bulky body and pink, mild face. Now his face was changed like a comic mask made devilish—his loose heavy hands pawed in front of him to help his progress like the flippers of a swimming seal. His eyes were merciless. And behind him, rising and falling, a hammer crushing on stone, came the noise which had taken his heavy body and made it light and frenzied and powerful—the buzzing staccato of the mob saying, “Urr. Urr. Urr.”

Now and then he took breath to glance back where his friends were following him and see that the black, ragged figure, that mowed like an ape between the two automata who gripped it, was still held fast. After each glance he attacked the hill again with his mouth set tighter and a look on his face as if he had been refreshed. It seemed to Jean that the mob moved slowly—she could not get over the feeling that they were not real people at all but dolls come alive and horribly busy at mutilating another doll—but it must have moved more rapidly than she thought, for the fat man was nearly up to the pines on the other side of them before she had strength enough to obey Gabriel’s frantic tuggings and run, tottering, down the hill.

They looked back when they had reached the bottom of the field. They had not been noticed—the mob was too terribly absorbed in its own business, and Jean had worn a dark coat over her dress. There was a light in the pines, now; a light that wavered and was ruddy like the light of a spring bonfire. The mob-noise stopped utterly for a second—then the thing came for which it was waiting—a long, shaking, animal scream like the scream of a tortured horse. The mob-noise trampled it, dragged it under, worrying it exultingly, as dogs worry the body of a rabbit, yelping and groaning.

“O Christ, they’re burning him!” said Gabriel, in a whisper.

Jean had always thought herself physically hard against most emergencies, but it was Gabriel who got her back to Huguenot House, half-carrying her as they walked. But after she had rested a little, two blocks from the gate, the cold nausea that had held her ever since her last sight of the pines passed off and her body felt less as if it were trying to run away from a bad dream. She walked the last two blocks steadily enough, and they said good-by.

Any passion that had been in them was dead as mummy—and the truth that, for a moment, they had thought they had seen had gone, leaving them stripped. They had neither regrets nor illusions concerning what had not happened—but that was all.

They shook hands, tiredly. Jean hoped that her hand had been firm. She watched him down the street until he turned the corner. She felt perfectly sure that they would never see each other again, and quite as sure that that was the best, if the least gaudy thing that could happen to either of them.

As she dragged up to the porch of Huguenot House, Jean realized with every step she took that she was completely exhausted, and the hysteria of exhaustion very nearly overcame her as she slipped her key in the door. The mob would walk through her nightmares as long as she lived, she thought—but in her present state of utter fatigue the satiric aspect of the evening came over her with a brutal, prodigious humor. Enormous accident—so she hadn't given herself—if she had, what then? She did not know—couldn't think—that fat man's face—the negro—Gabriel— A dizzying desire to laugh and laugh at the top of her voice till she cried seized her—a desire held back only by difficult efforts of what was left of her will.

She closed the door and stood in the dark, cool hall, breathing in its familiarity as a blessed antidote to all that was devouring her. Then she noticed that Aunt Eve's door, at the tops of the stairs, was ajar. A thin spurt of light came through it. Fear sobered her—a different fear. Surely those were voices—low voices—the doctor's voice——

She crept upstairs on tiptoe. Cecily met her at the door of Aunt Eve's room, her face drawn into the grotesque woe of a sad black-rubber toy.

“Thank the Lawd you come back, Miss Jean, she’s been askin’ foh you foh de las’ half-hour. Oh, Miss Jean, Miss Jean honey, I’m skeered that chahyut’s swingin’ low foh Miss Eve!”

BOOK TWO—FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CHAPTER I

JEAN'S sudden marriage with Shaw Ashley eight months after the death of Eve Huguenot was, from any angle, such a sensibly practical step that it left her with a perilous distrust of applying practicality as a poultice to the larger hurts of life that was to last like the scar of a healed burn at the bottom of her memory all the rest of her years. She found herself on the snowy anniversary of her wedding day, sitting downstairs in the pleasant living-room of the red house on Greene Street, Whitney, Massachusetts—a wife by the just-opened telegram from Shaw containing "all the love in the world" and the information that he might be late for dinner—a mother by the bassinet upstairs and the little mental alarm-clock inside her brain warning her that in just about twenty-six minutes little Eve would have to be taken up and fed—and yet with a feeling somehow that all the physical appurtenances of her new life, Shaw, Eve, the servant rattling in the kitchen, the flurries of snow that feathered against the window, the extra six pounds she wished she could get rid of, even the very comfortable cane chair in which she was sitting, had been set up around her in one scant moment like stage-properties hurriedly arranged—all seeming real and solid enough to the audience, doubtless, but mere cloth and paper to the first inquisitive poke of an exploring finger.

Tejan had not had much time to think things out for herself

since she had been married—the hurry of life had gone too fast for her to appraise with any calmness the twelve-months' rapids of experience through which she had been shot like a canoe—it was only during the last two weeks that she really had tried to look back. The task, as far as it could be accomplished consciously, was nearly over. She had just about time enough, before Eve would demand her again, to thread the last funny beads on the funnier string that held them together. And as she weighed the final ones of the set in her hand, she marveled—for, taken together, the months in their entirety jumped at her in the inconsecutive flashes of country seen from a fast train—a hill here, a valley there, a stream that appeared as suddenly as if it had broken out of the ground and vanished as if it had been swallowed, a farmhouse with little dolls of people and animals suspended for a rigid instant in the middle of their tasks—a sequence of odd pictures taken at random, and all with a phantom quality of unreality about them.

Aune Eve's funeral was real enough—and the conversation two days later with Willy Tuckerman of Tuckerman, Tuckerman and Bower, who had told her (in the bleating voice she had christened him "Sheepy" for when he was eight) that, after Huguenot House had been sold she would have \$1,233.52 a year to live on. Aunt Eve's annuity had died with her, and it was not until Jean had looked over the dozens of old account books kept in Aunt Eve's clear, painful hand that she realized how deeply the Huguenots had been in debt at Charles Huguenot's death and with what gradual

relentless patience that debt had been paid, and how it and Aunt Eve had aged inseparably together till the extinction of the paper giant had brought with it the extinction of the living woman.

Then St. Xavier for a month—a St. Xavier grown as ghost-like as sea mist. Living at the Crows', passing Huguenot House and seeing workmen busy in the windows, painting, papering, changing irrecoverably and forever the big cool rooms that she had always considered as inseparably a part of her person as the shape of her chin. The garden clipped away from wildness into smart respectability—bright horrible red and white striped awnings over the familiar eyes of the windows—Cecily gone from her kitchen and a shiny enamel gas range looking down superciliously at its surroundings where the black monster of a stove had stood. Everything smoothed over and polished and varnished and made falsely new—Jean would never be able to go farther than the porch again without the feeling that she was calling on aggressively well-mannered strangers——

Asheville, again with the Crows—golf and tennis and dances for Alice and walks for Jean—a general atmosphere of pleasant happy expensiveness through which Jean felt she moved in her severe Southern mourning like a crow in a canary cage. Hating it to be so—hating the talk to hush just that kindly little whenever she came into it. Being a guest and hating to be a guest, even with Alice, and fiercely resolving to take the next train away to anywhere where she could earn her living without anyone feeling they had to pity

her, and then not taking that train or any train because of that deadly physical lassitude of body and mind that weighed on every impulse like a hot cloth garment. A lassitude she could not understand, for she had never before experienced anything like it—it was as if all the elasticity of youth in her had been stretched just a little too far for her will and senses ever to be springy and light again. Alice waking her up at two in the morning to tell her she was engaged to Stu Cazenove and crying (Alice crying!) because at last she was sure of herself and sure she was the happiest girl in the world.

Then the losing of Alice—or rather the changing of her and the not seeing her really except when Stu was gone and she wanted to talk about Stu. Everybody being so glad about Stu and Alice. She herself being very glad, except for a haunting suspicion that Stu would never quite forgive her for the fact that he had once proposed to her, Jean. Life going on. Life going on, going on in such queer ways and so altering people that it was too much like trying to climb a mountain of rolling sand. A lunch party at the hotel for Stu and Alice and the tall young man (hadn't Stu said he was a teacher at some Northern college?) with his beautifully conventional clothes and his blond hair clipped close as a terrier's, who had sat beside her and talked with a slow manner and a settledness of force in what he said that had come like a soothing syrup to Jean's sore mind, remembering Gabriel. Assistant Professor Ashley. Mr. Ashley. Shaw Ashley. Shaw.

Another picture opened like a Japanese water-flower. End of August—Shaw was really going away at the end of this week—he had been really going away at the end of every week since he came. A picnic walk through green alleys of rhododendron, the heavy blossoms flowering the green like a casual pattern on chintz, faint pink, cream cold. Stu and Alice, Shaw and Jean—the genuinely engaged pair lagging behind as usual with babyish craftiness or far ahead. A perfect day Mrs. Crowl had said—and, lo, it was perfect (things had a way of obeying Mrs. Crowl), a blue day, cool and limpid as a running wave.

Shaw talking, not cleverly with the anguished cleverness that had so torn Gabriel but comfortably as brothers are expected to talk and most brothers Jean knew did not. She knew he could be clever, though—little spice seeds of information about him came from Stu *via* Alice, who did her best to plant them in Jean's rather unruly soil—and three of the most widely advertised had been that Shaw was the youngest Assistant Professor in Whitney College, that he was going to be the biggest American historian America had ever had and that in college he had been voted the most brilliant man in his class. All superlatives—Stu lived in a world of superlatives these days—but the superlative that he had missed and Jean liked the best in Shaw was his sureness. Everybody expected great things of Shaw and he always seemed quietly confident of never disappointing them. It rested her to be with Shaw—rested her even to watch the unobtrusive skill with which he built the fire to cook their

bacon on and the thorough way he stamped it out when lunch was over.

You could trust Shaw as you could trust a well-built house—climb up into him and be safe and not even the wind could touch you except to cool you. Likeable. Ordered. Safe. But first of all likeable. After Gabriel Jean distrusted lovable people as much as she did her own judgment. Somebody you could like and be peaceful with—that was better—that was what everybody told you was the best thing in life to find——

Then the walk back and Shaw asking her in his level decided voice if she would marry him. And three days later she had told him she would.

It had all seemed so decently ordered, so sure, so sensible. She had seen them going along as they had gone that day in the woods, liking each other, being good friends, loving soundly—she could not imagine Shaw in any of love's more fantastic poses any more than she could imagine him deliberately assuming a false beard. Loving soundly because love was only the coffee and toast of life and people who thought of it as a food or drink more illustrious were like people trying to live on brandy-pudding. She could help Shaw in his life and she would, with all her strength. She could love Shaw. She *would* love Shaw. It was good to relax and good to be protected, good to see the right stream in time and take it so it hurried you down into a clear wide pool. The other way was only salt in the throat and the too-great undiscipline of ocean. Only, sometimes, as she watched Stu

and Alice and the way they looked at each other when a table or callers separated them, she had vicious doubts and reactions. For she knew the possession that was on them, and it resembled in no tiniest pulse of the blood her feeling for Shaw.

Shaw wanted them to be married in December; he had no near relatives but some cousins, an aunt, and a limply adoring mother who wore sweet-pea gowns and told Jean she was so glad her dear boy was marrying such a dear girl. The days swept on toward Jean's marriage with the dancing swiftness of bubbles over a rock. Notices—presents—letters—letters that sometimes hurt her indefinably and at others made her merely humorous, for they seemed to assume that she lived in a world like a colored bubble. And then there was that curious night three days before her marriage.

She was sleeping in the guest room of the Crowls' house—they and Shaw had both insisted on her being married in St. Xavier—and she woke about one in the morning with the nightmare terror still upon her that follows the instant of awakening from a bad dream. But she had not dreamt. She lay there with her eyes open, hardly moving, and a fear that she could not reason away, for it had neither name nor senses, pressing down upon her like the body of a soft, huge animal. Desperately she tried to push the unreasonable thing from her with both hands, going over the common details of the room, object by object, in her mind. A mantelpiece. A table. Three chairs, one straight, two comfortable. Two windows—each had eight squarish panes of glass. Two

windows—and the heavy terror drying her throat till she could not speak. If it would only be light.

She tried to argue with her terror—what business had any terror now with her? She was happy. She was safe. She was going to be married. She was *absolutely* happy. But the terror did not move, it sank its heavy flesh on her flesh. A weight like that of a dead child. She turned cautiously over on one side and pushed her nose into the pillow. She would sleep, she *would*. Till the sun came in through the windows and everything was safe again. And, as she made the resolution, she knew that she could not sleep.

She lay there, quaking, as a horrified wonder tiptoed about her mind. Would it be like this, all the time, when she was married?

But at the heels of the wonder came a thought as soothing as Alice would have been in the old days. The light, of course. Terror lived and ate in the dark—as soon as the light was turned on it would vanish. With the shuddering movement of a child reaching out to a favorite toy for help when it knows there are murderers under the bed, she felt for the electric light button and switched it on. The instant glare set her blinking but her heart bounced with an immense relief. There—it was only the Crows' guest room and the terror was gone.

All the same, the best thing to do was to get up and walk around a little—read, perhaps, until she was sure it would not come back. She found slippers and a wrapper and prowled aimlessly—the air had a nip to it and she shivered

suddenly, realizing that she was cold. Should she go back and go to sleep—leave the light on, perhaps? No, she ought to be more tired before she did that—so tired that there would be no bad time of wondering whether she could sleep or not. The presents were in the next room—if she slipped out quietly she could go in and look at them without waking any of the family. Shaw's presents. That would be like being with Shaw—and Shaw the terror would never dare to bother—he was far too self-possessed.

They were all so pretty and new and shiny, the presents, set out like an intelligent window-dresser's prize display on their proper little tables. She picked up a creamy-backed hair-brush with J. H. on it in clear blue and smoothed the soft back with her fingers affectionately. For one of the few times in her life, greed of possession came over her. That was hers—J. H., Jean Huguenot. And the silver, the silver of Huguenot House with its old lovely wornness, the glib pleasant new silver Shaw's aunt and cousins had sent—the linen, clean and fresh to feel and never used at all——

She passed from table to table, smiling lovingly at a piece of odd bright china, pursing her lips at the purple bulge of a concealed but still hideous flower bowl——

And then suddenly all the calm good-looking presents seemed to change in an instant and strike at her. It was not terror now nor any human fear but something more definite and wordless, a desolating chill like cold chains falling on the flesh. Those things—those polite, piled riches—were not presents; they were weights she would

have to carry all the rest of her life, and they knew it and blinked at her in malice as she picked them up one by one and loaded them into the crammed sack they were set on making her bear till it crushed her shoulders. They were not hers—they had nothing to do with her—they were Shaw's, every one of them, Shaw's, and it was he who had picked them out and bought them so rich and very solid—no light things—so that even if she tried to run away they would hold her to the ground like leaden shoes. And then there was the house that she and Shaw were to live in always—she could see herself staggering like an over-burdened snail when Shaw's firm, sensible hands had bound the house securely upon her like a knapsack—and Shaw's aunt and cousins and all Shaw's friends and Shaw's mother and Shaw.

She saw Shaw's aunt and cousins and friends—they were ranged on top of the silver chest, a proud row of wooden soldiers. Bitterly she picked them up one by one, her hands sinking under them, and dropped them with a clashing sound into her bag. She hefted the burden—it was still what muscles could bear. But there was more to come.

Shaw's mother, for instance. She took the china doll with the smile that had been broken and riveted together and laid it on top of the other things, gently, respecting its crackedness. And now the sack was full. With a heave that pulled the muscles of her arms into throbbing cords she got the buckling weight between her shoulder-blades, settled it into place. She could feel her shoulders go forward un-

der the compulsion and thrust them back straight again.

There still remained Shaw. She saw him leaned against the wall like a dummy in an excellent clothing store. What fine wax he was and how well he set off his modestly expensive trousers! The glass eyes were empty and brilliant and successful. The curve of the mouth was frozen in a proud and capable smile.

She took the light, inhuman body in her arms, bending it at the waist like a closed jack-knife. She dandled it on her knee for a moment as a woman who believed in bad fairies might dandle a changeling, in fearful propitiation. Then she slung it around her neck, across the sack. The legs dangled helplessly behind her; the cool, wax fingers with their pink, manicured nails she clasped around her throat. As soon as she had it on her back the weight changed—the weight became a huge iron hand that was pushing her flat to the earth. Shaw's head came nodding over her shoulder in lifeless companionship. She moved crampedly—one step—two—she would not fall while pride could keep her will stiff as metal.

Well, she had chosen the weights for her burden herself, at any rate. Most didn't. And she hated Indian-givers. There was only one thing that would have made her burden easy—the color and taste of life, the very elixir of it, that she and Gabriel had shared imperfectly on best moments of their best days together and that no one ever seemed to find in its perfection. Something ached in her mind and was quiet. It seemed to her, in the clear, intense second that

followed that ache, that she knew what love was and could be as she knew the room where she was born, and that it shook her dust from its feet and left her arrogantly, as a king goes out of a pitiful town. She had pride enough left to watch without speaking as the banners moved to the distance and became unreal as cloud—when the last had gone she hunched herself under her load like a crippled water carrier and went quietly about her business of living and dying.

Jean was very sober as she shut the door on the gift room and slipped back to bed. She lay awake for a long while, but this time without terror, unless all thought is terror. She saw nothing in herself to change the conditions of life as they seemed to be in her symbol, and very little for which she could ask special favors. She considered with an open mind the possibility that her present state of mind might be the mere fever of reaction. She had decided on this thing and given her promise. Aunt Eve's kind of Huguenot didn't break promises easily.

At any rate, there was no possible way of finding out the color of the future except by living in it—and the best way to begin was by having a good sleep. She composed herself tyrannically for rest with much of Aunt Eve's determination. After a while she slept. And, when she woke in the morning, she was able to laugh at herself, perhaps unwisely, for terror and vision alike seemed gone with the dark.

More pictures went by, hasty and blurred. St. Xavier's Church much as it looked on ordinary Sundays, except for

rather more flowers on the altar. The smell of those flowers—the creaky pedal on the organ. Saying the words she had to say over and over again in her mind until she nearly responded “I will” to “Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?” Shaw, standing beside her and making his replies in a voice so boyishly emotional that it startled her as if he had changed his face. The cold, smooth touch of the ring on her finger. Coming down the aisle on Shaw’s arm; wondering whether her hat were straight (she had been married in a traveling suit); wondering why older women cried at weddings and if it was because they wished they themselves had not married or were sorry because they could not do it all over again once a year; wondering why an event that was supposed to change her whole life had only taken twelve minutes; wondering when she would really feel married and how it would feel when she did.

The honeymoon at Asheville—only ten days, because Shaw had to go back at the beginning of the new term. The honeymoon with a strange, excited man who seemed, most of the time, much younger than she was; a young man with the simple desires and designs concerning her of a boy towards an open candy box; a man who wore Shaw’s body but had left behind him as completely as the rice that had been thrown at them, every grain of that calmness and strength in reserve that had made her think of Shaw as a house to rest in.

The farcical astonishment of sex—Shaw spared her little in matters of crude revelation without ever really awakening

her, and she accepted it merely as a curious detail of her new existence, a detail that might be wholly revolting were it not so bizarre. The adventurous feeling that the man she had married was by no means the sane, successful image she had thought him, but a human being like herself, as full of cross-purposes as an eddy and requiring more than tact to manage and more than scorn or aloofness to understand. These things carried her on.

And then there was going back to that *terra incognita*, Massachusetts, and two months of playing the newly-married bride before Shaw's friends and their wives and the Faculty wives and Shaw's cousins—a flagrantly interesting impromptu performance, especially with a new house and a servant to move about like doll furniture—with the days too crowded with new sensations and trying to find out how Northerners worked, to worry about anything but the business of the day. And then in March, she knew that she was with child.

She passed through the usual sensations—it was a very different thing from trying to imagine what it felt like to have a baby, to know that you were going to have one no matter whether you liked it or not. She had erratic moods when she hated everything from the sick taste in her mouth and the fact that Shaw insisted on sleeping in health-pajamas, to the knowledge of the inevitable event, hurtful, possibly, beyond any event of her experience, that was to come. "Lordy, Lord, I feel as if I were a ship with a time

bomb on board right out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean," she said to Shaw once, bitterly, and shocked him so that he was stiffly querulous for two days. But there were other days when she felt for the first time in her life fulfilled—days with the deep peace of a forgotten summer meadow—when she dozed and her mind seemed too quiet and satisfied to think, and gestation was the most natural experience in the world.

These last came much fewer than the first, however, and it was in the last two and a half months of her pregnancy that the imagined burden of Shaw began to grow real. They spent July and August at the Marvin Ashleys' farm twenty miles or so from Whitney—a stay for which Shaw had logically advanced the best hygienic reasons. Jean, with nothing but a blind knowledge that she wished to see as few people as possible in her present state and those few strangers, was obliged to yield. The farm was everything that could be desired from a physical culture standpoint and Jean thrived on it—but neither Mrs. Marvin Ashley, a sturdy brunette who had borne three raucously healthy children already with the ease and precision of a prize guinea-pig, nor Aunt Amelia Ashley, whose mind was a mortuary parlor of accidents that might and did in her cognizance occur to prospective mothers, would ever leave her alone.

It was not that they intruded blatantly; both were solicitous to a degree that made Jean long bitterly for the antiseptic detachment of a trained nurse; and both had a conviction that they knew exactly how she was feeling every second

that made her want to howl like an angry child. Shaw took everything they said for gospel—the three formed a sort of obstetrical Court of Star Chamber that was always meeting in the oddest places to discuss intimate aspects of Jean's case. Unfortunately the meetings were not always out of earshot. Then after the prisoner had been tried and sentenced, as she was about four times a day, Shaw would quote Cousin Jessie or Aunt Amelia or both to Jean with the same lengthy satisfaction he took in appending notes to a monograph—a process which made their names and their prescriptions buzz through her sick mind, sleeping or waking, like a crowd of mosquitoes. There was a sense of protective combination in the very way they walked—an air of carefully overlooking Jean's necessary pettishness and fancies and shielding her against herself that drove Jean wild.

"If Shaw would only treat me like a rational human being," thought Jean when at last she was alone and pretending to be asleep as hard as she could, lest Shaw, in the other bed, should notice that she wasn't and immediately start doing things for her that she didn't want done, "I think I'd be grateful enough to love him all the rest of his life." But Shaw had been too well schooled by his relatives and his success to be natural in a crisis—he had a curious thick-sightedness towards other people that had often helped him immensely by enabling him to disregard imaginative possibilities.

And in August a creeping fear came over Jean. Young Marvin Ashley, a bold stupid four-year-old with more health

than sense—the kind that men praise in public as a healthy youngster and in secret itch to thrash—was curiously like Shaw in a dozen unconscious tricks. Was her child—hers and Shaw's—was her child to be all Shaw's after all, all Ashley, rather, without Shaw's brilliant streak—when she, Jean Huguenot, had carried him nine months in her body? She couldn't stand having a child that was all Ashley.

She returned to Whitney completely fagged out in mind though healthy enough in body. Shaw, removed from Aunt Amelia and Cousin Jessie, was much better—though in the main he remained what he was and always would be, efficiently considerate in large matters, the nurse, the room in the hospital and so forth, and entirely unseeing in the small things that came up twenty times a day and each one of which seemed larger than an Alp to Jean.

Mrs. Ashley arrived to help. That meant that the two women were much together, and Jean soon discovered that Mrs. Ashley's help consisted in talking vague sweetness on the beauties of birth, recounting anecdotes of Shaw between the ages of three days and eighteen years, knitting white wool jackets and weeping senilely whenever Jean dared express a doubt of anything but bliss in her confinement. "Oh, Jean, dear, you shouldn't talk so, it isn't trusting in God. He will see that you come to no harm if you only trust in Him," was her principal palliative.

"If all I did was trust in God, Mrs. Ashley, I wouldn't even have a doctor, though. I'd just go upstairs and lie

down when the time came and live or die the way He happened to feel."

"Oh, Jean, it isn't right to talk like that! Think how your baby would feel, your dear little unborn baby, if he knew you thought he might die!"

"I don't want him to die—you know that," said Jean impatiently. "And, anyhow, he can't die until he's born and he isn't born yet and if he knows anything about what's going to happen he's just as doggone scared of it as I am."

"Oh, Jean, that sweet little innocent thing! It doesn't hurt them."

"Then why do they yell when they're born? I bet it hurts just as much that way as the other—only he'll forget about it in five minutes and I won't and—oh, well, let's not talk about it any more!"

"I think we had better not, Jean—it seems to excite you so. Isn't it time for your bismuth?"

"Not yet," and then Jean, for the dozenth time, explained in detail the whole regimen prescribed by the doctor—a program which, as many of the articles in it had been written after her one experience of motherhood, Mrs. Ashley regarded with a settled distrust.

About a week before she went to the hospital, Jean had a conversation with Mrs. Ashley that left her knowing that however sentimental the latter might seem there were depths of instinct and fierce feeling in her mild bosom.

They were sitting together in the living room, Mrs. Ashley knitting, Jean trying to read and finding that the words

danced annoyingly in front of her whenever she got really interested. Mrs. Ashley had given three tiny preparatory sighs—her usual prelude to speech—but Jean had paid no attention. Finally the older woman let the soft tangle of her wool fall into her lap, crossed her pink hands over it and turned her face timidly to Jean.

“Jean, dear, may I speak to you about something?”

“Why, of course, Mrs. Ashley!” Jean closed the book wishing that even the tiny slap it made in shutting did not make her grit her teeth and that Mrs. Ashley’s voice was not always so timorously sweet. She had never felt more physically ill in her life—she only wanted to sit still—and the conversation would be about nothing; it always was.

“Perhaps I have no right to speak of it, Jean, but I have sought the Lord’s guidance in prayer for these last three nights and I feel that subject to His will we must prepare for any eventuality.”

Jean’s laboring consciousness rallied surprisedly. Mrs. Ashley’s hands were strumming with the knitting as if she had a piano in front of her. Her voice held shy determination.

“It seems distrustful of Him and unkind toward you even to discuss such a dreadful possibility. But you yourself have tried to talk to me about it many times, Jean, and I have always kept you from it—sometimes a little brusquely I fear——”

“But what *is* it, Mrs. Ashley?”

The old lips hesitated, tightened, took the plunge.

"The Judge of hearts knows in His great goodness that I shall pray for you unceasingly through all the time of your trouble, Jean. I shall pray for you with the whole strength of my soul. But should our Lord in His infinite wisdom choose to take you——"

The verb pierced into Jean like a splinter of ice. So it was true. So Mrs. Ashley, even through her silliness, had felt it, too. Great as the anguish of childbirth. Jean tightened her hands over each other till the knuckles stood out. Then she looked at Mrs. Ashley and saw the weak hands were trembling and earnest, the weak eyes filling with tears. She could not understand—surely, surely it was not for her sake that Mrs. Ashley was so moved, yet it must be a stronger thing than mere ageing sentimentality that could move her so. The next words were as stinging and unexpected as a probe on a hurt nerve.

"Oh, Jean, Jean, darling, you won't make Shaw promise never to marry again, will you?"

For a moment Jean really did not take in the meaning of the sentence. Then it struck her as if someone had suddenly stopped her heart. She had a horrible instant of seeing herself lying dead and Mrs. Ashley above her, weeping volubly and measuring her for her grave clothes, brisk and nimble as a burier-beetle, very kind, very dutiful, but very glad in her heart that now Shaw would be able to marry again. Some nice girl she knew, this time. Some girl she could sympathize with and cry over and advise as she had never been able to do with Jean.

Why, of course Mrs. Ashley did not like her—how could she? Why, of course Mrs. Ashley thought that Shaw had made a mistake. And all these months she had kept the knowledge she was so pitifully sure of, to herself and Jehovah, and never, never, for an instant, willingly, let Jean or Shaw suspect. Why——

Jean looked at Mrs. Ashley again. She was crying frankly now and the words she had wanted to say and suppressed so long came rushing out.

“Oh, Jean, dear, when you have a baby yourself, you’ll understand! Shaw’s my baby, Jean, the only baby I had and, oh, I so want him to be happy and he’ll never be happy without a wife—men aren’t that way—though nobody could ever take your place with him, I’m sure. But so many foolish girls make their husbands give promises, and then it gets so miserable, and you wouldn’t want Shaw to be miserable because he married you, would you? Oh, Jean, he’s my baby, my baby! I can see him when they first put him in my arms, though he’s grown to be such a big, clever man—oh——” and she went off into breaking sobs that were real and shook her as wind shakes a withered bough.

Jean felt neither hate nor fear when the first shock of the words had passed. Instead there came intense pity and a queer respect. Mrs. Ashley seemed foolish no longer—perfect worship is never foolish no matter how inappropriate or ungodly its god. Here was something Jean could do, at least. Mrs. Ashley need not worry. Jean saw Shaw, handsome in his new, correct mourning, leaning on his mother’s

arm, and how that arm held him close to her with a ferocious pride in being the only arm that could really console him. She saw Shaw marrying again two years, three years later, and smiled without rancor. She got up heavily and went over and put her arm around Mrs. Ashley's quaking shoulders.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Ashley. Of course I shan't. Why, I wouldn't for all the world."

She felt the fragile, indomitable body tremble gratefully. They had never been so near to each other before—they never would be so near again. For an instant they looked at each other and knew a bond. Then that was over.

"Oh, Jean, I knew you would say that, dear—I knew you were unselfish—I knew—" She clung to Jean's arm with the grip of a drowning child.

"God bless you, Jean, God bless you!"

And Jean spent the next half-hour, in spite of her own weakness, soothing her as comfortingly as a grandmother away from tears and back to needles and wool. Jean never spoke to anyone of the conversation—which may be attributed to her as righteousness, though, like most of her righteousness, not a standard brand.

The only real comfort Jean got before her confinement, except for the brisk medical terseness of her doctor, was from her cousin-in-law, Marvin Ashley, a large, stolid, masculine being whose slow-footed way of talking amused her as much as it seemed to irritate Shaw. He came to see her twice in Whitney, with some fruit, that, he explained cum-

brously, Jessie thought she might take a fancy to. Though his visits were short, he gave her an impression of largeness and quiet that was like the opening of a window in an overheated room. The second time he talked slowly for a quarter of an hour or so about affairs on the farm—a gradual enumeration of petty details of growing and harvesting that, somehow, left Jean with a healthy feeling that she was a useful but not immoderately important item in the scheme of things and that if a tree could bear apples, year after year, with such consistency she could probably bear a child without any greater tragedy than some bodily pain.

Then Marvin stopped and sat ruminative for a moment, like a solid, healthy cow gazing calmly about its pasture. His eyes twinkled and were friendly.

“Feel pretty fierce?” he said, suddenly, but in his usual, placid voice.

The words filled Jean with intense relief. Here, at last, was somebody to whom she didn’t have to pretend.

“Oh, God, I *do*!” she said, with great sincerity. She would have had trouble with Shaw about that reply for an evening—he would have thought it grotesquely coarse. Marvin merely nodded.

“Jessie thought she’d die with her first,” he said, deliberately. “Plumb sure of it.” He smiled, without irony. “Wrote me a letter a yard long telling me how to bring him up and for him not to forget his mother. Sounds funny to tell you, I suppose.”

"Oh, *no!* I just thought it was me—that I was different——"

He shook his head, soberly, and put one hand on her knee. It seemed as steady as the touch of the earth to her.

"Always that way with the first," he said. "And Jessie's strong. Not that you aren't too—far as muscles go. But 'tisn't the same thing. When Jessie's tired—she stops. And she isn't nervous. But you keep on long after you're tired to death because you don't want other folks to see you're nervous. Well, I guess I'm intruding, saying this——"

("You, are," thought Jean, "but I'm glad you are.")

She said, "I wish you'd go on."

"Well, it's nice of you to say that. But all I wanted to say was—just try and don't think about it as much as you can—and don't you pay any attention to what other women tell you about theirs. It'll hurt like sixty when it comes maybe, but you've got every reason to expect yours 'll hurt less than most." He chuckled slightly. "And *don't* let Shaw fuss you," he confided. Then he raised a hand in deprecation. "I'm not criticizing Shaw. I think Shaw Ashley's just about the smartest man I know. But there's lots of things about a woman when she's having a child that the cleverest man on earth don't realize till after she's had it, for she doesn't like to tell him, generally. I didn't at first and I made it lots harder for Jessie than

it might have been. Well, I've learned a little now, with three."

He rose slowly.

"Better be going, I guess. And if I've said anything I shouldn't—don't you mind what I said. Good-by, Jean. Tell Shaw I'm sorry I missed him."

"Good-by, Marvin. And, honestly—you've helped me such a lot more than any of those darned old books!"

She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek with an impulse as sudden as a child's. He flushed, but seemed pleased.

"Well, I guess it's up to the Ashleys to do all they can for an Ashley. We stick pretty close together. And Jessie and I are friends with you, *we* think."

He moved solidly to the door and went out, and Jean, looking after him felt genuinely comforted for the first time in months.

There was little more comfort for her till she went to the hospital, only an increasing rather terrifying feeling that her body was ceasing to belong to her as the child grew and began to move within her. Then her time came.

Jean, looking back from her present physical well-being, remembered it as something racing with waves of inordinate pain, and yet flurriedly unreal as a dream in fever. The reality came when she woke, weak and exhausted, her head still heavy from the anesthetic, and was shown her daughter. She had not imagined that a baby could be so small, so wrinkled and red as if it had been badly packed for ship-

ment, so complete from its hair to its delicate toe nails, so blindly, utterly defenseless. At first sight it also frightened her somewhat for it made her feel so incompetent.

The nurse took it back with a professional, patronizing smile. She dandled it for an instant—one scientific dandle.

"A *splendid* little girl, Mrs. Ashley. Just a *splendid* one," she crooned with a wonderful absence of any emotion whatsoever in her voice. "So *big!*"

"Yes," said Jean, absently, then abruptly, "Are you—are you quite sure it's all *there*—I mean—ears and everything—it *seems*—but——"

The nurse laughed mechanically.

"*Quite* sure, Mrs. Ashley. Why——"

But Jean wasn't sure at all. She wanted to look at the curious thing again.

The next day, she discovered that she loved the curious thing. In spite of all her previous wishes not to feel or act like a Madonna. Mrs. Ashley had, at various times, bestowed upon her small colored prints of three different famous Madonnas. But they had power to stir Jean's wrath no longer. She didn't care.

She had seldom been jealous before. But she was jealous now. Her first impulse was, simply, to keep this daughter with her every moment because nobody else could understand her as Jean could. Since this was impossible, for what did seem good reasons, she resigned herself to getting well again as soon as might be in order

to take over charge of her daughter in the shortest possible space of time.

It took longer than she thought, however—she learned later that she had had a difficult labor and that, for a time, they had thought a choice would have to be made between mother and child. The doctor advised no more children for a year, at least—a stipulation which seemed to wound Shaw both in maleness and tribal pride—she knew he wanted a son to be named Shaw Ashley Jr. Jean told herself she felt sorry. She did, a little. Her first sight of Shaw, after the event, looking as if he had been wrung out to dry, and yet more boyish than she had seen him since their courtship, did a great deal to bring them together. And his attitude toward the baby was properly respectful, even fearful when he held her.

As for the elder Mrs. Ashley, she wept profusely into small Eve Huguenot Ashley's basket and over Jean's shoulder—she felt ready to say *Nunc Dimittis Gloria*, she told Jean, now that Shaw had such a darling baby. A feeling that would not prevent her, as Jean very well knew, from doing her best to be the kind of grandmother that is remembered with wet eyes in popular songs, and in real life does her very best to spoil her grandchild's temper and digestion from the start.

Jean looked at the clock on the mantel. Five minutes more before Eve should be fed. She smiled as the thought of the child sleeping came into her mind—she went to sleep, as Jean did, all at once. She grew magically in body

and intelligence—every added ounce and new sound seemed extraordinary to Jean. For the first time in her life she had found a necessity that occupied her spirit continually. She thanked, sans mockery, whatever the mocking chance had been that led her to marry Shaw that it was so.

Eve's future, up to the time when she should go to college, she had settled to her own satisfaction in at least six different ways. Everything should go right for Eve from the first, unless . . . A pain as profound as it was reasonless came to Jean's body as she ran over the million things that might happen—that should not happen. Of course there might be other children to think of, later—she saw them, dimly—other women had more than one—but she could not imagine another child like Eve.

Time. She rose, swiftly, and started upstairs. Thinking of Eve, she was happy.

Shaw Ashley put back into his pocket the typewritten sheets of the short, striking paper which he had read before the New England Historical Society a few hours ago—a paper which he had now just finished rereading with a secret, mounting pleasure. He stared out of the parlor-car window at the white snow-stricken country that unrolled so smoothly before him, like a bolt of patterned goods on a counter, and would so unroll all the way from Boston to Whitney, and wondered whether he had better smoke his cigar now or later.

Later would be better; he felt too pleasantly tired, too

pleasantly victorious over his undoubted success at the meeting even to smoke. He had made just the impression he wanted to make—taken a small incident of colonial history that most historians had rejected as unimportant—laid it bare as the missing, essential joint that connected two highly important bones of the period under discussion—let just enough brilliance creep into his discussion to show that he could be brilliant if he wished, but never was without the soundest historical backing—finished and sat down, at the close of a final decisive sentence—all done in just the right tempo and at just the right time. There had been just the people whom he was most eager to impress at that particular meeting, too—but then Shaw had always been lucky at choosing moments.

Had he ever tried to discover frankly what he really thought of this luck of his, he probably would have found that he thought it more destiny than luck. In spite of his careful historical training, he still cherished an admiration as unthinkingly devout as a grenadier's for Napoleon and it was with something of the Napoleonic celerity in seizing an opportunity that he had marched through preparatory school and college to the rising position in the small definite world he had chosen. Considerable money, pleasant manners, a strong body, athletic good looks, a talent for application that was intense, rapid and searching—these had been his since the beginning. He had graduated from St. Paul's with a letter in football and track, the second highest stand in his class, influential friends in the class ahead and

an increasing reputation for being an "all around man," due to the fact that he danced as acceptably as he played football, was suspected of being a secret reader, and yet was always willing to go out on a party and get the rest of the party home.

The college test was harder, for his class was a strong one, but the breaking of the first-string tackle's ankle in practice three days before the game with the Princeton freshmen gave Shaw his numerals; his methodical methods of study put him in the first honor group of his class—and while really much less formed than many of his shyer classmates, his quiet largeness gave him an appearance of tact and solid good judgment that helped him in spite of himself. He made his club so easily that his delegation, half of them men from his own school, elected him "king" without quite knowing why. After that Shaw's success was certain. Next fall the star-tackle's ankle gave out again in the middle of the Yale game and Shaw made his letter—in the spring three rather clumsy but very thorough essays on minor literary characters drifted him into the last place on the "Literary Monthly" board at the tail of a weak competition—by his Junior Year he was one of the "biggest" men in his class.

At his graduation he could have gone into any one of half-a-dozen different businesses with every chance of being quietly helped to success from the top—but he had quite enough money already to satisfy his tastes, which had never been flamboyant, and also a certain funny distrust of him-

self in coming to grips with other men which his easy triumphs had rather exaggerated than cured. History had interested him immensely from the first—he took the cool pleasure of a chemist in resolving things into their elements, except that in history the material one worked with was as safely dead as the paper one wrote it on—these things had happened, it only remained to find out why—there was none of that odd vivid force left in them that made living men behave in a way beyond reason and logic—and the necessary drudgery of scholarship he submitted to patiently enough.

Moreover, there were two qualities born in Shaw which seemed strange to him and not to be explained by all his best logic. He never spoke of them to anyone, but he knew they were there, like hidden genie bound to serve him for a while; and one he invoked as often as it would come with the secret abasement of a wizard calling a strong spirit; the other he held under as best he could like a panther in a wicker cage.

The first was indefinable—a fusing of the mind with the material worked upon, a sudden clear-sight that opened in a moment, like wind blowing leaves away from a sunken path, the whole track along which he had been plodding step by step. It had come a couple of times in football games when his admirable defensive playing was suddenly overmastered by a clear flash of anticipation—and he *felt* as definitely as if he were the Yale quarterback calling the signals exactly where the next Yale play would go. It was

by one of these flashes that he had been able to break through in the last game he played, quite against his judgment, and nail the opposing halfback ten yards behind his own line.

Another had come when, near the end of his career in Graduate School, he had realized that he was so buried under the mass of material which he had collected like a patient cutworm for his doctor's thesis that nothing but a miracle could save it from being ludicrously incompetent. Then suddenly he saw, and in fifteen minutes of burning concentration he had sketched out the one plan by which the smothering drift of mere information could be condensed and arranged. Another—a minor but important one—when, only a month before this last meeting of the Historical Society, after racking his brains for a dozen weeks and making three tentative false starts on his paper, he had known precisely the very thing which would bring him the greatest scholastic *éclat* if he used it—all based on a small fragment of information he had almost forgotten he had. He hoped and feared with the same dumb unreason that these flashes would continue to come in the future, for without them he knew himself, subconsciously, to be nothing more than a conscientious plodder. His classroom work, while popular enough, was no worse and no better than average—there again he had to be so intimately in touch with what was alive.

The second disturbing force in him, and one that accounted in an even greater measure for his insecurity toward

and hesitating fear of life, was physical passion. Ever since he had been a small boy this matter had worried him, as he thought, uniquely. It was one reason why he trained so rigorously for athletics—the bodily exertion dulled the bitter edge of the uncalled-for sensations and emotions that rose like bubbles in a pool when he was at ease. In college the position he had had to keep had restrained him from dubious amorous adventures—and, besides, the ease with which what his New England upbringing told him was his baser nature, was aroused frankly terrified him to such an extent that during his life at the Graduate School he lived almost like a hermit, with dumb-bells and long walks into the country to take the place of a hair shirt. Looking back, now that he was older, he could see, after a fashion, the reason for these things but that did not help him very much.

In the first place though he was a man of a large acquaintance, he had no real intimates even in college. Again, he was the only son of a mother who worshiped him so completely that she had looked with the frightened eyes of a hen at the shadow of a chicken hawk, at any girl to whom dear Shaw seemed to be paying decided attention. Study and games between them had tied him to a more or less rigid schedule of life, except in the summers, until he graduated; a schedule in which meeting girls had no particular place except at occasional dances. And during the summers he had noticed that his mother's health, always delicate though never actually failing, had grown alarmingly worse every time

he had suggested his departure alone and unshielded to house-parties where girls might be about. Then, too, while the girls that came to college dances were always properly impressed by his athletic prowess and social position, Shaw had never learned the trick of easy talk, and somehow, though he had an agreeable time enough with them, it was always with an ingrown shyness bred of loneliness on his part and hesitation on theirs, and the pleasant acquaintances never became either sweethearts or friends. He saw his classmates marry, and wondered amazedly how they had the trick of it—even the first approaches of flirtation came too startlingly near that touching of live matter that he had always dreaded—he retired into his papers and exercises like a squirrel scuttling back into its wheel at the first hint of anything so definite and human—and his classmates wondered mildly and guessed that old Shaw didn't care about girls anyway when the only trouble was that he was afraid of caring too much.

In his last year at Graduate School the stress suddenly grew too great for him. He attempted three cautious experiments in New York that only left him with a raw disgust for himself, and a savage resolve to master his evil nature by overwork if he had to break himself in doing so. Then had come three years of instructorship and one as assistant professor—forty-eight months of dogged battle, continuous study and little exercise till one of his flashes told him that he was heading straight for a nervous breakdown and must pull up.

He went down to Asheville in June resolved to marry as soon as possible if he found any girl he considered at all suited to him, and he started writing letters and renewing social connections he had let lapse in the last four years. Then he had met Jean—and been swept off his feet the moment he saw her by a need for her beauty more huge than anything he had ever known. He had Puritan agonies of mind during the first part of the courtship at the thought that it might be for that beauty alone that he wanted her—but the obviousness of the fact that she did not love him in the romantic sense and yet was willing to marry him seemed to make things right—and it was with the sense of making a sensible bargain for both of them with life that he stood beside her in the church.

He considered that bargain more closely now and wondered timidly whether it was not changing under his hands to something he had never either wanted or imagined. And yet so far it had done nearly all he had hoped from it—the passion in him was docile now, a tame animal—though even yet he dared not admit it openly, but went to his wife's arms with a shamefaced feeling of being half savage and half driven child in submitting both of them to something she had no rapture in and he no gaiety. Still, the four years before his marriage seemed in retrospect so variously tormented that he could not reasonably wish them back.

But he had also made the discovery that his wife was as much a living thing as he was, a living thing whose secret

innernesses he could no more master or understand by mere possession than he could gentle a thoroughbred hunter with the spur—and moreover a living thing that both judged and disregarded him and with which he would inevitably live the greater part of his life. Moreover, Jean's beauty stung him and made him jealous in a fashion beyond his comprehension—he had not wanted her, selfishly, to have a child so soon since its coming hurt that beauty for a while, and yet he had wanted her, as selfishly, to have the child. A vague smoking-car remark about "kids keeping a woman quiet" stirred uneasily in his mind. And she had insisted on not having another child for at least a year. Well, that made a problem.

And then there was Eve. He had hoped for a son—but he was incredibly interested in his daughter. If she loved him it would be perfect—cool and perfect, real love that nourished without any of the febrile nervousness of unwilling passion he felt for Jean.

Would Eve love Jean better than she did him? Would Jean be jealous of Eve's loving him? Didn't Jean already give Eve such love as he had never had from her? Would——?

One thing must be made certain. Whatever happened he must do his work. The last three days had shown him that in five years more he might be a full professor with much leisure for research and always that chance of a flash from somewhere leading him to the success he knew he deserved while he was still young enough to have

it delight him. He would be successful, he knew it. However life bothered him, he would be. And if the clash ever came between the life he had taken and put in his house with such rash, inescapable necessity and the other life, the deep, cold, satisfactory life with dates and books and papers—well, the first would have to give way and that was all. However, it wouldn't come to that. Things like that only happened to the unsuccessful.

He glanced out of the window again and saw a station-sign—Westley. Only half-an-hour left—hardly time to smoke his cigar with the proper care before he would have to go up to the house and dinner and Jean.

CHAPTER II

Conversations (1905-1911)

JEAN AND SHAW

It is night. Shaw has just switched off the little reading light over his bed, yawned, settled himself for sleep.

"Good-night, Jean."

"Good-night, Shaw."

A moment of silence as the cool begins to freshen both. Then:

"Shaw."

Rather complainingly: "Yes, dear. I'm tired, you know. Hard day."

"Oh, nothing."

"Well, what?"

"Shaw, as soon as the new paper comes for the guest room, I think I'll move in there for a while."

Icily: "Yes?"

"To be nearer Eve."

"You're only two rooms away from her now, Jean."

"Yes, but it makes a difference. When I think she may be crying and can't be sure."

"As you wish, of course. Far be it from me to prevent you." Shaw is pluming himself a little on his powers of sarcasm.

Silence again, but the freshness has left the tired bodies.

"I wish you wouldn't always take things like that, Shaw. It's tiresome."

"Very sorry indeed—to bore you. But it seems to me I see very little of you now except at dinner and breakfast."

"You're working most of the day. At college or in the library."

"I have to, if I am to make any progress at all in what I'm doing."

"Well, I try to help you as much as I can."

"By seeing me at meals."

"I should hardly call it my fault that you work in the evenings except when we go out or entertain other people."

Both voices are nervelessly polite. They clash against each other unnaturally, thin, hurtful flowers of wire, their contact never resolving into anything but brittle discord.

"It seems to me that a wife has some other duties besides providing food."

"So has a mother. And the food problem with Eve is worse than ever since I've stopped providing it personally." An irrepressible snicker from Jean that puts Shaw on his worse behavior at once.

"I have often wondered if so overmuch attention is the best thing for a growing child," he announces in his lecture-voice.

"Eve's delicate, Shaw."

"Delicate?" A snort. "She grows and eats like a young rooster."

With an irritated patience. "Dr. Lasker says——"

"You've told me often enough. I'm only her father, of course."

"Oh, Shaw, Shaw!"

"I have no rights there, either."

"You haven't the daily responsibility, Shaw. I'm not being a fool about Eve—the tall Lord knows, I'd like her to be the kind of a child that can run out and play in a puddle all day without even getting the snuffles. But she isn't, and there's no use pretending she is. She'll grow out of it in a year or so, the doctor thinks, but I've simply got to watch her now and it takes every bit of me there is."

"Well, you certainly watch her. I can't take her out for five minutes without your behaving as if I were going to strangle her."

"You certainly can't take her out in the snow and let her come within an ace of pneumonia because you believe in 'hardening' children, if you want her to live. You didn't sit up with her those nights—you didn't see how near—how terribly near we came——"

"Very well, since it excites you, I shall say no more about it. When do you propose to move into—your own room?"

"Don't be childish, Shaw."

"I'm not childish. I don't think many men——" The

words tail off into a discontented virile grumble. Jean, desperately:

"Let's be honest, Shaw. You think I've been a failure with you?"

"N-no. But it's all so different. Marriage is marriage. If you knew you intended to be this way when you married me, why——"

"I said 'honest,' Shaw. You seem to take it as a personal insult that I don't want to have another baby until Eve gets stronger."

"That isn't the reason."

Loathing herself,

"It is. Listen, Shaw," the words come feverishly, "if you don't want me to, I certainly shan't move into the guest room."

"Oh, you might as well."

"I promise you, as soon as Eve is better——"

"A nice bargain."

"Oh, Shaw, all life is a bargain. Good Heavens!"

"It wouldn't be if you loved me."

She sees him ridiculously for a moment like a spoiled pony begging for sugar. Marriage is marriage, truly.

"I do love you," hating the coaxing easiness with which the words come. It makes her add, "As much as you love me, Shaw."

"Oh, Lord, let's not start *that!*"

"Well, you brought up the subject——"

And so, until drowsiness comes finally and makes them

sleep without resting, for they are both too tired to stop deliberately, the unworthy, prickly bickering goes on.

JEAN AND EVE

The night sky, an immense dark bowl. The moon a rind of silver, glittering, thin; the stars many and crowded together and brilliant as frost. Through the window the hay-smell of summer, sweet, heavy with cut clover, new as fresh milk. Jean is putting Eve to bed.

The touch of the warm, fresh body, alive, breathing in life at every cell like a jonquil—a body in which nothing is old or tired or degraded or has anything but the cleanliness of air—is still on Jean's hands, though Eve is standing up straight in her nightgown in the middle of the crib. Eve is swayingly slim as a dandelion and her expression has, at present, something of the unconscious seraphic exultation of a choir-boy who has just begun singing the anthem after a frustrated attempt to drop his collection down the neck of his next-door neighbor. Jean ruffles her hair a little before kissing her good-night—it has already begun to turn darker in the wood-leaf darkness and sun-gleams of Jean's own. They are funnily alike as they stand holding each other for a moment—Eve's head, from where she stands, just reaching to Jean's shoulder. It is as if Jean, the grown woman, were talking to Jean, diminished to the size of a large fairy.

“Said your prayers, Eve, honey?”

"Yes, mother. I went and forgot Aunt Jessie once but then I remembered right away and stuck her back in. And I prayed for her at the end, too, so I guess that'll fix it up somehow, won't it?"

"I reckon so, Eve. Like your dinner?"

"Yes, mother. Good." And Eve rubs her small belly affectionately in a way that would make Shaw writhe if he saw it. Question and answer are part of a whimsical catechism that has grown up neither knows quite how.

"Like your summer?"

"Yes, mother. Summer's the nicest because there's cows and the farm and Uncle Marvin." The season it happens to be at the time is always the nicest. Christmas, rain on the roof and maple sugar support the respective claims of winter, spring and autumn.

"Like your house?"

"Yes."

"Yes what?"

"Yes, Jean." The name is always given a little hesitatingly but with intense satisfaction.

This is rewarded by a mocking kiss on one ear after the other. Then:

"Love your mother?"

"Oh—darling!" and Eve's arms tighten about Jean's neck. They stand for a long moment wholly embraced.

"And now you're ready and right sleepy." This ends the ritual, always, and usually Eve goes to bed silently after

it. But to-night she has something to ask. She shuffles her feet. She doesn't want to go to bed.

"Mother?"

"Yes, Eve."

"Will you lift me up?" She points to the window. "It's so lovaly out where it's dark."

The adjective is a new acquisition and Jean does not correct her present pronunciation of it. She may to-morrow morning, but to-night is to-night.

She takes Eve up again and goes, half-waltzing with her, to the window. Eve's eyes are round as she peers out from Jean's arms at the hushing, deep night that flows over both of them now.

"Oh, mother, it *is* lovaly," and she climbs closer. Neither wonders, neither moves; they are drowned; streams that had run together into a sea; they lie at rest in deep peace. Eve's voice mixes with that peace, a voice clear and awed.

"Stars, mother."

"Yes, Eve, stars."

Again the round eyes look far, and far beyond far, into that vast darkness where those flames of ether consume like a fire of diamonds, celestial past any understanding, radiant, cold.

"What are stars, mother?"

Shaw would start talking about chemical constituents and Mrs. Ashley tell the fable of Weedle the Star-Fairy who makes the stars out of children's defunct good-deeds. Jean wishes that she could tell her daughter that she would

explain the whole planetary system to-morrow morning. If there were any chance of Eve's forgetting about it, she would. But there isn't. She has to confess.

"I don't know. But they're lovely, Eve."

"Lovaly." The child breathes a deep, satisfied breath. "Listen, stars, I love you, you nice things!" she says in a whisper. Then, burying her face against Jean's neck. "Mother, could little girls play with them if they had them? I want them, mother. Mother, can I have some, *now?*"

SHAW AND A DINNER PARTNER

"But, Professor Ashley, *do* tell me something about the Balkans! They're so stimulating, don't you think? The stormy petrel of Europe—isn't that what you *clever* people call them?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, Miss Gusset, I know very little about the Balkans. From what little I do know, the question seems to involve three opposing nationalistic programs. First the Drang nach Osten, you know——"

The woman would so inevitably misquote whatever he said that it was perfectly safe to talk learned-sounding nonsense to her in the faint hope of muzzling her for a while. Meanwhile, as his voice went on, his eyes searched across the table for Jean, laughing ribaldly with that new young man in the English department. Jean in evening dress—white shoulders and a green-and-gold dress that suits her as its petals suit a crocus. Jean, her eyes dancing,

her lips half-parted as she talks what seems to be inspired silliness to the sleek young person beside her. Jean, perfect in movement and repose, gleaming and glowing like a statue made of gold rain, infinitely desirable, infinitely removed, her eyes never once turning to where he sat and bored and was bored. He thought hopelessly that she was more beautiful now than she had been when he first married her—maternity had given her a certain richness that was all that had been lacking to her completion. For the moment he was more truly in love with her than he ever had been.

“The symptomatic aspirations of the Greeks——”

He hated her because she looked so happy. She had no right to be so carelessly amusable when he was suffering. He would like to take her away and put her in a strait-jacket, to break her as he was nervously breaking a piece of roll between his fingers—to subdue her until she came to him, shivering, like an ill-treated kitten and asked for nothing better in life than not to be kicked too hard. He——

“But the rise of Bulgaria under the protection of Russia——”

Dinner was nearly over, thank God, and at the end of it he could get away from the female octopus beside him. But then he would have to talk to somebody else, not Jean, and watch out of the corner of his eye to try and catch what it was she could be saying to the young English instructor that made her look so impudent. Until it was time to go home. And when they got home, things would be no better

—the first thing she would do would be to go up and look at Eve. This wasn't marriage. A husband used to have authority. Authority. As the Turks had—those sensible Turks. A harem. A cage. At least he could make some sarcastic remark about that foolish young man. A cage. No, a treasure chest to keep what was yours, what ought to be yours as utterly as your clothes if things were well arranged. A chest where you kept what was yours and took it out and looked at it as you liked and were glad because it was yours forever and wouldn't disobey you—when you didn't like, you locked it up and felt safe.

“So there you have the situation in a nutshell.”

JEAN AND ALICE CAZENOVE

The last morning of a three days' flying visit from Alice. The last morning of piecing old threads together, laughing over ridiculous small memories both had thought forgotten, dissecting changes four years had brought both to them and to St. Savier—Alice's Stuart Junior and Mary Lou, Jean's Eve, Ricky Cotter an ordained minister, Bessy Grandier married to a Detroit millionaire, Mrs. Cotter dead. They have talked incessantly—talked each other out over every scrap of detail that is so absorbing to both, Alice like a good needlewoman darning and patching together, Jean with the thirst of a consul marooned on an island for a bundle of two-months-old home newspapers. Only one question remains, the most searching, and that, in Alice's case seems answered before Jean has a chance to ask it

There has been worry of a dozen sorts in Alice's four years, but only the worry in the mastery of which there comes a certain maturity of soul. Alice is thinner than she used to be and Jean has seen her grow visibly in health during the three days' visit, but her whole face has a look of content and decision, the eyes are settled. Jean's face, in spite of the fact that she has kept so much more of her youth, seems as anxious and drawn with nerves as her hands are restless—the face of a cross-country runner who has lost track of the course and so speeds up desperately, hoping against hope that mere sprinting will put him right.

Jean looks at Alice swiftly. It is a searching look but it has none of the baser part of envy in it—only tiredness and a peaceless desire for the content that Alice has made for herself and Jean has not.

“Happy, Alice?” she asks, casually enough, as her needle travels along a hem. “Really?”

She is a little afraid at first that Alice may take offense. But Alice laughs untroubledly.

“Busy, Jean. Two children and a husband and a plantation—I suppose I rate as a sort of mental guinea-pig now. Oh, Lordy, Lordy, and one time I used to be so set on having a mind!

“But happy? Well, whenever I do get a chance to think back it seems to me I've had so much already I get scared something's going to take it away from me all of a sudden. I may be one of these nations that has no history, Jean—but I wouldn't swap the last four years for a couple of Renais-

sances and a Reformation with the French Revolution thrown in. Stu's written me four times since I've been away," she adds with apparent lack of sequence. "Says he can't find where anything is in the house!" She laughs again but affection floats over the scoffing.

"He doesn't say a thing about Mary Lou in his last and I know that means she's been bad," she reflects. "And the new cook must be a variegated fool of sorts from what he says about her. Well, I'm not going to give up buying those clothes in New York if Stu has indigestion for a month—but I certainly reckon I'll be glad enough to get home."

Her thoughts have so obviously and smilingly gone back to that triumphal return that Jean has not the heart to recall her. The children doing their best to get run over by the baggage trucks on the station platform, Stu fussing with his watch, the six arms all reaching for her at once as she steps tiredly down from the smoky Pullman——

Alice, except for accidents, is safe now; she has received good territory from Chance, the blind landlord. For Jean there is the road over sand, the sack that must be carried—and Eve. And thinking of Eve she feels with a stabbing ache how ungrateful she has been, to the sack even, to life most ungraciously of all. After all, nothing else matters.

"Well, you ought to be pretty contented yourself, Jean," says Alice, comfortably for Alice.

"Guess I will be as soon as Eve grows up a little more," says Jean, this time with an answering smile.

JEAN

Jean had been shopping downtown—unimportant purchases. It was still early in the afternoon when she finished and decided to walk home.

It was a day in the first week of May more than four years after her marriage. Spring had come in a week after a hard winter, the rich, surprising, heady spring of New England, and, coming, brought a smooth languor to her blood, an ache to her bones.

She remembered the South—all that winter she had remembered it—all that winter had seemed to her like a long, cold tunnel at whose distant end she saw, dreamlike, a clear, tiny picture, the South she knew, yellow, lazy light on its streets and gardens, full of perfume and warmth as a syringa-bush in flower.

She opened her lungs to the scents of spring about her, hungrily, thirstily. New leaves, elms heavy with green, the soft, bright air, the moist and steamy earth, sun, light. But they did not satisfy her. She wanted a hotter sun, a heavier, sweeter smell of flowers, magnolia and Spanish bayonet, the sight of a red dirt road and a negro cart. Walking along streets so familiar that they made no imprint on her mind, she felt suddenly alien. She seemed to have been away from herself for a long time.

This spring was not the spring she desired, that strong, hot, idle opiate. She was homesick for the South.

She thought of her family for an instant—her father,

her father's father, Aunt Eve—Huguenots, Newsomes, Audreys, Freyns, back to the first Charles Huguenot, come from God knows where to begin a name and a pride. They passed before her like a procession of horsemen, tall, stubborn and nonchalant, the olive men, the gay women in forgotten costumes, easily riding with a loose rein. To what purpose that procession? She was the last of them—with her their name died.

And what if it died? No name lasted very long. Nothing lasted very long. Funny name. Funny life. If she had been a man she could have painted the Huguenot name in fresh colors and gilt again. Kept it on for a while. She played with the idea.

If she had been a man she would not have had this beauty of hers to employ her. She could have built up the name—brought fresh, strong blood to it by a Northern marriage. She smiled. Shaw might not have made such a bad wife. His nervous peevishness, his fear of conflict would have been better in a woman—there they could have had the relief of easy tears. He liked the feeling of social position and fussing with a house. Too bad.

But to what purpose even so? To build a sand-castle on the edge of the sea that the next tide would erase. To stick a paper flag on top of it and clap her hands at the sight. And yet men seemed to get their greatest happiness from doing such things.

Men did not have to bother or be bothered by the appearance of their flesh so much. Old, peaceful men, whose work

and children had prospered, must be the happiest, she thought—they did not have the same fierceness and jealousy for their children that women had, and yet they could enjoy them.

But she was not a man. She was a woman, and her function she had been often told, was to give. So far she had given freely enough, it seemed to her, without bringing much content to anyone, with only one tangible result, Eve. Was the difficulty in the gift, the giver or the theory, then? "*Something* is rotten in the state of Denmark, Jean, sure enough," she murmured to herself with a grin.

She was married to a man she did not love and who did not love her, at least as love was talked about. That situation would be so definite, in a magazine. There would be spectacular scenes—alarms and orchestrations—until the injured lady fulfilled herself by running away and starting a successful tea-room. Jean did not find things quite as easy as that.

Shaw was not brutal or intentionally cruel—she did not drink or waste his money or nag him continually. They were not happily married, but how many people were?

She had given a promise—as long as he did not break, by definite act, his side of the implicit bargain, she must keep it. That remained to her out of the Huguenot points of honor, antique, fantastic perhaps, but cut in her mind like a seal.

Fiction laid stress continually on the physical acts. The physical acts in themselves meant nothing—were only

strange—it was what one brought to them. She could not bring what she did not have—what Shaw had never given her.

And yet, Eve. She did not understand.

Her soul trembled within her like a shaken flag.

She wanted another child.

If her function was to give, she would give then, to the height of her powers, if her function was to expend, she could expend in children the beauty made for impatient love with less compunction than an angel's for the body he has forgotten. Something would make this right. If she poured herself out like water, if she gave herself wholly, not to Shaw who did not want her wholly, but to the child who was to come, something must make it right.

Something must give her the power to transmit to others the action, the buried voice, that cried in her so for fulfillment, the ache for richness and splendor. That silver barbarian shook the bars of her body with its ethereal passion. Something must make things right if for the sake of children she submitted herself to pain and distaste—that was only just.

The Huguenot riders passed before her mind again—a debonair procession. But she felt stronger than they were. The spring air about her was mild and sweet. She came to the lawn of her house. Eve and the temporary nurse were on the porch. Eve saw her and ran, shouting. She hugged the slight body in her arms, for some reason very near the tears she despised.

SHAW AND JEAN

"Happy, Shaw?"

"Oh, sure."

A little hush.

"Are you?"

"Yes, Shaw. It's nice to be warm again."

"You aren't. I know."

"I am. Honest to God."

"It makes me feel——"

"Yes. What?"

"Oh, nothing. You wouldn't understand."

Reflectively,

"Why let the stricken deer go leap,
The hart ungalled play,
For some must wake while some must weep——"

you wake and I'll weep, Shaw—is that it? So runs the world away?" (Half-singing.)

Violently, "*Oh!* You—*never* be serious!" Something seems to choke him for a moment. "Weep indeed! As if you ever did. You couldn't—you're too darn cold."

A core of brilliant ice seemed to form in her heart. "Too cold," she said aloud. Then she began to laugh.

"Here, stop it, stop it!"

But she could not. She laughed, laughed, overmastering laughter, freezingly painful, like breathing snow.

"Stop it! Stop it, I say!"

She struggled to control herself. "Too cold," she repeated, and laughed.

"Jean, for God's sake!"

The laughter stopped.

"A fool is bent upon a twig but wise men dread a bandit. *Which* I know is very pretty though I don't quite understand it. It isn't anything, Shaw. I just don't quite understand it, that's all."

Almost whining, "You know very well what I meant! You know I didn't mean——"

"It doesn't matter."

"Oh, of course, if you take it that way!"

After a little while.

"I suppose I am cold. I'm sorry, Shaw."

With a certain shame. "I didn't mean that, you know. It's just——"

"I know. I think I know. I'm sorry I said that—those—whatever it was."

A mumble whose intent is obviously apologetic. After a while:

"I think I'm going to have another baby, Shaw."

"Oh!" Shaw is intensely relieved. For a while he thought that she was going to be hysterical and he would have to throw water on her. Now, of course, all is explained.

"Sure?"

"N-no. But I think so."

"Oh." With entire sincerity. "That's fine."

"Yes, I'm rather glad myself."

Naturalness has returned to her voice. But the icy core is still at the center of her heart. Hard as a diamond, she thinks distractedly, hard and cold and sharp. Not for tears to melt away, even if they came. But they do not come.

"Well, Jean." Tentatively, "That's fine, you know."

"Isn't it?"

She must never let anyone else suspect the ice in her body. Even Shaw doesn't know where it really is.

"Mother'll be pretty pleased."

"Yes. I wouldn't tell her right away though, if you don't mind. You see——"

Magnanimously, "Of course, dear."

A pause.

"Well—good-night."

"Good-night."

JEAN AND EVE

Jean is sitting on the Marvin Ashleys' porch, watching Eve and Jessie's children play together. Jessie's boy and two girls are as healthy and normal as young white mice; the girls still have something of the universal wide-eyed innocence of first childhood about them but the boy already possesses much of Marvin's muscle-bound strength and slow way of talking, though he lacks humor and is wholly literal. Eve plays among them with a complete but self-respecting

friendliness, like a changeling teaching three village children mild magic, Jean thinks, maternally.

Eve is the youngest and the two older girls give her the motherly adoration they would to a live doll—quarrel over her and do their best to spoil her with kisses, candy and adjectives—a process Jean does all she can to discourage, though, as far as she can see, Eve receives whatever attentions are paid to her with abstracted inattention. It is Eve that supplies the imagination for the quartette. She is doing it now.

"This is a castle," she announces, pointing to a maze of sticks on the ground that she has been arranging with finicky deliberation. "And you've got to get into it, Jessie, 'cause you're the imprisoned princess."

Jessie is about to step carelessly into the middle of the ground plan, but Eve takes her hand.

"You can't walk over the walls, you know, Jessie," she explains gently. "They're high—oh, higher'n your house—they're high as the sky. Here's the door."

She swings aside a stick and Jessie is permitted to enter.

"Now Harriet's the king—you don't have to do much, Harriet, except wring your white hands and say, 'oh my dear daughter!' when the prince is fighting the dragon. If you think there's anything else you want to say too go ahead," she adds graciously, though she is obviously as worried as a dramatic coach at the first night of a performance given by society amateurs.

"You listening, Harriet?"

"Oh, my dear daughter! Oh, my dear daughter!" pipes Harriet obediently, then, lapsing into a more conversational tone, "Say, dragon, won't you let my dear daughter alone? Say, dragon——"

"You never say 'say' to dragons," Eve interrupts precisely. "Say, 'oh, dragon.'"

Harriet is completely under her thumb.

"Oh, dragon!" she begins again meekly. "Oh, dragon! Oh, my dear daughter! Oh, dragon, here I am here, wringing my hands—listen, Eve, you little cuteness, what do I do when I wring my hands?"

"Flop 'em!" says Eve without pause or puzzlement. "Just flop 'em and flop 'em! Like this," and she makes a gesture like the beating of the wings of a little gull. Harriet does her best to copy it, wagging her stubby palms.

"Say, Eve, what am I imprisoned for?" from the captive princess, who has got a little tired of her stationary rôle and is about to rest herself all over the battlements.

"'Cause if you weren't imprisoned the dragon couldn't come and eat you. Marvin's the dragon."

"I always gotta be that blame old dragon," grunts Marvin disgustedly. "I never get a chance to be anything decent—and anyhow you stick me too hard when you kill me, Eve!"

Eve meets the rebellion diplomatically.

"You know it's just 'cause you make such a *peachy* dragon, Marvin," she says with delusive flattery. "I'd rather be the dragon than anything else, but I'm not big

enough, it takes somebody big and writhy like you to be a real dragon!"

"Huh! And get stuck in the belly with that stick you call your sword!"

"Well, I won't stick you hard this time, Marvin, honest I won't! Just look, why it isn't sharp or anything!"

She produces Excalibur and waves it before the reluctant monster.

"Huh—looks pretty sharp to me," he says doubtfully. "And you remember this time when I'm down, I'm down, and don't keep on stickin' me!"

"All right, I promise. You're such a *lovaly* dragon, Marvin!"

Marvin's ears begin to turn red—he is thankful that his father isn't about.

"Ah right—let's get to it, for Pete's sake, and get it over with!" he groans, disgruntledly, and crouches down on the ground, panting like a collie on a hot day and getting dust up his nose under Eve's excited admonition that "Now, Marvin, you're just breathing fire all *over* yourself!" He cocks a wary eye at Eve as she approaches him with the tense lightness of a matador—the seriousness with which she takes these games, once they are begun, sometimes scares her three cousins a little. The dragon bellows horribly, sneezing and blowing flames,—the prince bores in—"Oh my dragon! I mean my daughter!" wails the disconsolate king.

Jean watches it all with a pride in Eve that is as hardy and bright and bodiless as sun on a leaf.

December, 1911

Christmas coming close again, and getting things ready for Eve's fourth Christmas tree—and Jean's knowledge that in two months she would be twenty-seven, and Shaw thirty-two in April—and that other knowledge, as she moved slowly about, wondering whether a gilt angel or a red Santa Claus would take Eve's eye most at the top of the tree, that her second child had every likelihood of being born within a few days of her own birthday. She was sure it would be a son, this time, and her sureness seemed to please Shaw. She had only one fear in connection with its coming—that it would leave her too ill during the three worst months of winter that were always so dangerous for Eve.

She wondered when Eve would come back—she had wrapped her up warmly and sent her out to play for an hour on the porch because it was such a clear bright afternoon of clean air and powdery snow after the finish of the three-day blizzard. She slipped to the window—yes, there she was, woolly as a teddy-bear in all her wraps, playing some mysterious game that necessitated hopping on one leg along the cracks in the floor and stooping to pick up imaginary substances from time to time. The cold had flushed her like an apple—how enchanting she was, Jean thought, as always hungrily and as always anew. She blew a kiss to that absorbed blue back and turned away.

Jean felt more contented than she had since the first two months after her honeymoon—Shaw and she had separated

by wordless agreement on everything but the business of matrimony, but the jealousy in him seemed to have burned its way out with the news of the coming of her second child and she had lost a great deal of her oversensitiveness towards him and (she thought, a trifle acidly) most of her bodily revolt. They did not love each other, of course, as she understood love, but she had discovered by now exactly what Shaw wanted of her and was perfectly willing to give it, no matter what her preconceived ideas on the subject might be, for the sake of the fact that by giving she could have peace.

For the first time, also, she could see a steady future ahead of them—she with the children, Shaw with his work—he was sure to be made a full professor next June and intended taking part of his sabbatical year alone in Europe, a prospect to which Jean looked forward with great equanimity. She had honestly tried to help him this last year in every way she could from having his dinner right to talking tactfully to important members of the Faculty—Jean had a certain humorous talent for politics which she found herself amusedly interested in exercising, now Eve's growing strength left her freer. Shaw was going to start the book he depended upon to make his reputation next year—there too, in spite of his impatience with her intelligence which, being female, he would never be able to conceive of as anything but rudimentary, she had been able to give him assistance on several small points which he had brought to her with the defiant irritation of a child who cannot find

the next piece to put in a picture-puzzle and comes rebelliously for help.

Shaw was sure to be successful, and with his increasing success would come wider interests for both of them, people, affairs. It would not be the life that she had planned, it had a colorless certainty about it that at times appalled her, but, take it all in all, it would probably be a better life than she had any right to expect. A better life than most—a level road through a territory without mountains or valleys. Perhaps they would really grow together as they grew older—she and Shaw. Perhaps it would be easier when the years had made her dull and ugly and tired. Her beauty was still so vividly upon her—though the girl's adoration with which she once had worshiped it was gone and she was able to appraise it as coolly as she would ever be able to appraise any beautiful thing. At least now she could detach herself from it almost completely, at times, and the pain and delight she got from it then approximated those of a spectator.

She had had a different beauty once, as intimately hers as the flow of her blood, that and first youth and feet that never got tired. She had not bargained very well with them, she thought without self-pity. She would never have what Alice Crowl had—but then Stuart Cazenove could have given it to her no more than Shaw. She had known no man who could have. She had made her bed—it was a good bed and well tucked in—she would lie on it hence-

forth without stirring much, till she was taken from it and did not know that she was being taken.

And then, suddenly, all the rebellion and heat of the youth she had not yet lost went through her like the sound of a hunting bugle. She had wasted twenty-five years as a fool wastes water on a march—was there any need that she should waste the remainder? What was she doing here, in this house that shut about her like the shell of a turtle, talking quietly and getting food and making clothes and sleeping beside a man she did not love? The silver enemy was in her blood again—a sparkling disturbance—a music rising. To think that she had lived here for five years when all she had to do was open the door! The walls that enclosed her fell apart like papers—she saw herself on the road again—somewhere—anywhere—but living to the last excruciation of body and spirit—a salmon thrown to the sea again—a fox gone away from hounds—a shape naked as a ghost and poor as starvation but crying as a cock does at sunrise with the fullness of life that was in her and could never be undesired or put away. The hands were on her shoulders, pushing her out to the snow. All she would have to do would be to turn the key in the door—and call Eve——

Eve—and, like an orchestra stopped abruptly in the middle of a bar, the rushing harmonics ceased. Eve, and the child that was not born yet but moved strongly and dimly in her body now as a wave does in the heart of the sea. What a fool she was! The road could go on to all the unimagined countries at the back of the wind but she could

never follow it. She had her countries here; the countries she had made, like God, of desire and her own dust. She would live and die here with the solemn content of a tree rooted fast to the spot where its seed fell blind. She had had curious thoughts enough before Eve's birth, but never this particular delusion. Well!

And now, would Eve like the angel best, or the Santa Claus? After all, the Santa Claus might be better suited to her eye for bright colors.

Eve came in from playing about half an hour later, seeming a good deal more silent than usual, for some reason. She had her dinner and was put to bed, but she talked very little and seemed extraordinarily tired after her hour and a half in the crisp air and when Jean undressed her the small body felt hot and heavy in her arms. Jean rubbed her thoroughly, much to Eve's annoyance and hoped that one of her colds was not coming on. But Eve dropped off to sleep so suddenly and thoroughly that Jean's wonder as to whether she should not proceed to other medical measures was quieted for the moment.

Then Shaw came back, an eager Shaw, anxious to race through dinner and work on the plan of his book—he kept Jean talking, and when she looked at Eve again before going downstairs the child seemed too heavily asleep to rouse on suspicion. Jean's uncanny sensitiveness to the slightest change in Eve's health or temper was dulled a little now, besides, by the physical discomfort and weariness.

ness of her own condition—and while an indefinite uneasiness floated through her mind like a teasing straw all the way through dinner and later when she was trying to finish a book before early bed, it was not strong enough to make her take the dragging journey upstairs before her own bedtime.

She said good-night to Shaw through the door of his study about ten-thirty—he was evidently in mid-career on his plan, for the voice that replied was as abstracted as a sleeper's and a little annoyed at being even that much interrupted—went upstairs, undressed slowly and then went in for her last look at Eve.

As soon as she saw the turn of the child's head on the pillow she knew with sick certainty that something was desperately wrong. Eve was not sleeping naturally—the flush on her face was too deep and burning for healthy color—she turned in her sleep giving little cries now and then as a dog does when he dreams—her mouth had a distorted look and when Jean took up one of her hands the skin was dry and puffy. She passed a hand over Eve's forehead—yes, that was fever—but not, as far as she knew, the fever of cold. A dozen tall phantoms, typhoid, pneumonia, scarlet fever, rose suddenly in her mind like corpse-candles. She fought them down, examined Eve as thoroughly as she dared without waking her, and went to the upstairs telephone.

Meanwhile, in the study, Shaw was as rapt out of his body as a saint in meditation, working with frantic thoroughness in the center of a fierce glow of mind. The flash had

come as he knew it would—the crumpled litter of papers in the waste basket attested to what complete futility he had worked before it came. It had come with racking completeness—specific as a blueprint and intricately complete in its complications as a spectacular mate in chess, the whole design of the treatise that would make him the solidest and most brilliant reputation in his field in the country. He held the thing ferociously to his mind while his pen wrote almost without volition—if he let it go for an instant it would fade like a magic-lantern picture from a screen and never return. The first half was blocked out now, broadly of course, but he would have time to remember and fill in details when the flash had vanished—the second half, the vitally important one, remained. He wrote and wrote till his fingers ached, his brain stung to extreme effort, and as he wrote he thanked God with pattering incoherency that Jean was safely in bed and that there was nothing that could possibly disturb him till he had finished.

Then he became aware, with vast unwillingness, that something *was* disturbing him—a sound that tapped insistently against his cold flame of concentration like the noise of a woodpecker, a knocking repeated and repeated at his locked door. He shook his head as if he were driving away a mosquito but the knocking went on, grew strident, was mixed with a voice.

At last "Yes?" he said, almost shouting, his voice thick with irritation. "Yes? What is it?"

A half-sob of relief answered him. The knocking ceased.

"It's Jean, Shaw. I'm worried about Eve. She's ill."

For a moment senseless anger possessed Shaw utterly. How like Jean—to choose the one most important hour of the whole year, the one hour he must have to himself if he had to shut himself in a cell to do it, to go into a silly woman's scare about Eve's health! Eve had been perfectly well when she went to bed—he had noticed her brilliant color especially. Then he pushed the anger away, if it once mastered him, even for an instant, the flash would leave him irrevocably. He turned his head toward the door but his hand kept writing.

"Can't you get Doctor Lasker on the telephone, Jean? I'm busy," he said, trying to keep the words calm but feeling them snarl in spite of him.

"There's something wrong with the phone—snow on the wires—they don't answer—I've tried upstairs and down. And I'm frightened."

Talk. Talk. Talk. Jean would stand there talking for an hour if he didn't stop her. Already the flash was dimming.

"Well, what can *I* do? Please be as quick as you can, Jean."

"I'd go for Doctor Lasker myself, Shaw, but it's started snowing again and it isn't wise for me to risk it. It wouldn't take you half an hour, there and back, even with the roads the way they are, if you took the car."

Half an hour. Half an hour and his best work would be ruined forever for a whim of Jean's.

"I'll go in the morning, dear, I'm right in the middle of something now. You know how you exaggerate every snuffle the poor child has into pneumonia. Good Lord, she was perfectly all right when she went to bed—it's impossible she could have gotten seriously ill in four hours. Go up and look at her again yourself and you'll see there's nothing the matter. And if you just wouldn't bring these fancies to me when I'm in the very center of the most important hour's work I ever did—colonies—mere silliness—busy—" His sentence tails off into disconnected words as he bends over the desk again. The flash glows brighter. There it is—there it is, of course, and as simple as threading a needle. What a fool not to see it before!

But the voice harried him with a frosty quality in it that he recognized impatiently. Jean in her tantrums.

"That's your—final decision, Shaw? You won't go for the doctor, even when I tell you Eve is desperately ill?"

"I tell you, I don't think she's desperately ill and neither will you if you take another look at her. I'll go in the morning, I tell you—I'll go in an hour, half an hour, just as soon as I've got this finished. I can't go *now*," he shouted with the temper of a cross child. Then the temper died away—his pen scratched faster—detail piled after detail, marching and working like ants for the good of their city, building out of inchoateness and imperfection a clear shining whole.

He heard two words with half his mind—words cold and distinct as the sound of broken ice.

"Very well."

"As soon as I'm through, I'll go, Jean," he called back, a little repentantly. Perhaps he was rather rude but this wasn't work that could wait. "Good-night," he tried a little later, but there was no response. Well, Jean will have gotten over it in the morning. Must be firm sometimes. He'll go—maybe—when the plan is finished. The plan.

The plan absorbed him back into itself again utterly. He did not hear feet going up and down stairs and the slam of a door—the creaking protest of a cold motor started unwillingly—the slur of tires over snow—the diminishing noise of a car driving away. All he knew was that after some unaccountable time that might have been minutes or hours later he was looking down at a neat sheaf of numbered sheets—and that his fingers were tired and his eyes prickled and his brain was cold. But that the plan was done. He relaxed mightily in his chair, yawning and stretching arms. Then he remembered. Jean wanted him to go for the doctor. He smiled amusedly. Jean and Eve will both be fast asleep by now.

He unlocked the door and walked slowly upstairs, on tip-toe. Two minutes later he was down again, with a scared face.

He went rapidly through every room on the ground-floor, looking for Jean, and was just about to pull open the back door and run over to the garage when he heard an automobile jam its brakes to a stop in front of his house. He ran back to the front door and threw it open, just as Jean was putting

her key in the lock. Doctor Lasker was behind her and both were powdered with snow and red with cold. The doctor's face surprised Shaw—it was intent with a seriousness he had never believed the round, pleasant man possessed. Then he looked at Jean. Her eyes were hard and blank—she did not seem to see him.

Shaw broke into expostulations, queries, demands finally that the doctor took no trouble to satisfy except with a few curt words. They went up the stairs without paying much attention to him, and Jean, though she had taken off her wraps, still seemed to carry such a chill about her to Shaw that he did not even try to touch her.

Shaw was left in the hall, nervously repeating to himself all the comfortable proverbs about women's fancies that he could think of for ten lifeless minutes till Doctor Lasker came down again. When he did so it was to give Shaw a list of orders with the terseness of a sergeant.

"You had better go straight to the hospital, Ashley," he finished. "And as soon as the nurse comes you must get Mrs. Ashley to bed, if possible." He hesitated, became more human. "Look out for the turns—the streets are hellish, even with chains, and it's snowing. But hurry as much as you can. I'm depending on you to keep Mrs. Ashley quiet and stay cool yourself—or I won't be responsible for her condition. I'll tell you—she'll know soon enough. It's diphtheria, Ashley."

BOOK THREE—"I FLING MY SOUL AND BODY
DOWN"

CHAPTER I

January, 1912

I.

JEAN was not sure how long she had slept or just when she had wakened. It only seemed to her that she had been lying in bed with her one concern the watching of a bough, heavy as an ostrich-plume with snow, that swayed gently backwards and forwards outside the window and with each new slight impulse of air shook a little of its crystalline powder to the ground in a tiny smoke-puff, for a very long time.

She was neither happy nor unhappy; she was, only. There was such a nullity of weakness in her body that she had spent what seemed to her a long time when she had first wakened sending a message from her brain to that hand on the blanket that seemed as disconnected from her as the plaster cast of a thin hand—a message to close its fingers. When the message was received at last and the fingers closed, she had almost forgotten that she had sent the message and was as childishly pleased as a little girl who sees a magician pull ribbons out of a high hat. That curious arrangement of bones and skin was her hand, then—that

series of protuberances that she could divine under the blankets, if she raised her head with the great effort necessary and looked all the vast way down to the foot of the bed, must be her body. She had less realization than a baby of the fact that she had a body. All she knew was that something living—something too close to her to be set off detachedly in words and called herself—lay in bed and was warm and mildly amused by things that all seemed equally important and unimportant from the motion of the bough outside the window to the fact that the hands of the small clock on the table beside her moved further apart every time she turned her head.

She lay there as a cloud might lie above a mountain. She had no thoughts—only the pictures of sights and sounds that bore no relation to each other. A little girl, who might be herself, she thought, spilling iron tonic down the front of a new white dress a few minutes before it was time for her to go to church. The smell of pines when you took a deep breath of them, resin and balsam. The sight of a lake lying like a blue piece of stone crumpled up at the edges in the center of a ring of hills. The white door of Huguenot House. Music heard—music rising—Bach, possibly—the Italian concerto, water-sounding, water-fluent. Was it Bach? To decide took too much effort.

Presently these things would mix into a stillness deep as feathers in which to lie, and when she rose from the stillness again the light in the room would be changed and the clock-hands different. It was good to lie within that stillness, but

it was good to be here, too, in this lethargy where every sight and motion was a discovery and she could look at anything in the room forever without being wearied, for there was nothing left in her to weary. Soon enough she would have to start thinking about things again; now she could not even imagine thinking. She rested in a stupor, in a pallor vague as steam, diffused as spreading water, a tepid obliteration of all thinking, all sense. Faintly she realized that her eyes were closing—she had not told them to close, but she accepted the fact. She had no choice in anything any longer.

When they opened the light in the room was yellower, the window a dark square, she could not see the bough. There was a sound near the window, too—a soft rubbery padding of sound with a creak in the middle. She liked the sound. Feet. Didn't people walking sound like that?

She managed to make out the cause of the sound and felt proud of herself at finding it was a person, a person in white linen with a funny white cap like those you got out of a cracker, walking softly about and not looking at her at all. She shut her eyes till she could just see through the lashes. If the person noticed that her eyes were open, it would want to talk to her, and she did not want to talk.

For ages she debated the sex of the person. A woman—men didn't wear crackling white skirts and funny caps. A woman in white clothes. She could see no reason for her being there but she received her presence with the same

strengthless composure she would have shown if the woman had been a gorgon. That was a woman. Very well.

She returned to her study of the shadows across the ceiling, but after another long while a little flicker of irritation awakened. She began to hate the creak and stealthy tip-toeing of the woman's shoes. This was *her* room—the room of Jean Huguenot—like a lesson in French grammar. She had not asked to have a woman in this room.

She did not want the woman—the woman disturbed her. There was no reason for her being there. Women in white clothes. Who wanted women in white clothes? She puzzled the question tiredly.

The answer came in a clever instant. Naturally. Women in white clothes were nurses. People had them when they were sick. When they were sick. The woman was a nurse. And then——

Sickness. Jean's hands began to twitch without her knowing it. Her mind beat faster, beat faster, a pulse going quick. Sickness. Sickness, sickness. Was she sick? Was she really sick? Was that woman there because she was sick? She could not remember what made her sick or why she should be so. She was *not* sick—she could move her hands quite smoothly now—they only jerked and were heavy when she tried to move them too fast. She could not be sick. She could not. She, Jean Huguenot. Jean Huguenot *Ashley*.

Recollection came back.

2.

Jean had one thing to be thankful for when she and Shaw paid their first visit together to the cemetery where Eve and the child that had been born dead lay buried—Mrs. Ashley did not accompany them. She sent a wreath, however, a wreath of purple pansies with “Suffer Little Children” worked upon it in white.

It was not very far, and spring had come early that year with warm rains and soft weather. Jean would have liked to walk but Shaw insisted on taking the car. He said very little on the way out, his orders were to soothe Jean’s nerves. Besides, he had heard that morning that some documents very necessary to his history had just turned up in the Library at Madrid and he was already planning steamship reservations. Jean, he felt, was hardly strong enough to discuss the matter yet, and so he was considerate.

As for Jean she felt very little, consciously, till they came to the gate. She noticed the details of the streets as carefully as a sick man counts the medicine bottles on his bedside table. Within her there was only a huge dulled emptiness as if all her senses had been, not destroyed but made lifeless, turned into pieces of machinery that carried on the mechanics of existence without pause or delight or question.

She looked at the ornamental doorway as they drove up to it. An inscription was cut deep into its face, “The Dead Shall Be Raised” and she thought that every stone of the gate gave the lie to that inscription—it was heavy brown

rock, the gate of an Egyptian tomb, solid as a pyramid, and upon it were meaningless scrolls and wings too heavy to fly. It seemed to squat there triumphantly like a stone monster brought from a hopeless country, pressing down on the sleepers beyond it, forcing them deeper and deeper into the earth with its weighty paws.

They found the graves at last—they were in the Ashley plot where no one had been buried since Shaw's father. The other stones had lost sharpness of lettering—were faded, in a kindly sort of way, Jean thought, as the grief for them had faded. One leaned a little toward one side like a tired man resting. Beside them the two small white oblongs of marble seemed hideously new.

"Eve Ashley," Jean read in fresh, deep letters on the stone at the head of the larger hummock of ground, not yet weathered, flowerless. Then there were sizes even in graves, it seemed. A queer useless thought came over her. Shaw talking to the man in the black suit. "A four-year size, I suppose—but she was large for her age."

"Eve Ashley, daughter of Shaw Ashley and Jean Huguenot, his wife. Born. Died." And, on the small, pillowlike thing of stone at the foot, "E. A."

She must look at the other.

Shaw was saying something about the directions he had given for planting flowers.

But *where* was Eve? But *where*? She couldn't be under those stones.

Jean wondered if Eve were warm.

The air had an April chill in it, in spite of the deceptive, mild sky. An untrustworthy day. A day on which Eve would be sure to catch cold, unless she were well wrapped up.

Then she remembered that that was something she would never have to think about again, either.

Shaw was saying that they had suggested geraniums for some of the plot. They lasted so.

A sudden, lunatic wish, strong and bitter as quinine, took hold of Jean and possessed her utterly as a lion's voice possesses his body when he rages. To get Eve out. To take her away. To dig with her nails into that heavy, smoky earth until she got to Eve and wrenched her away from the smothering weight of stones and soil that lay on her and crushed her. To take the body into her arms, no matter how changed, no matter how broken, until if they wished to bury one they would have to bury both. Eve couldn't be there—Eve couldn't. It wasn't possible. She would go back to the house and Eve would come running in.

She tried to bind all the strength of her body and mind together with the thin, hard cord of her will. Surely, if she tried hard enough, Eve would come to her. Surely, when you loved so much, when you wanted so much, it couldn't go out like breath into the air, obliterated, ended as crudely as a dog run over in the street. Leaving nothing, nothing, nothing.

She shut her eyes and willed to the last extremity of pitiful passion. Eve. Eve.

But when she opened them again there was the sky and the stones and those other stones that meant nothing and Shaw looking at her as if he were afraid that she was going to faint. That was all.

Then she knew that what she had thought at first was true. Eve was not there. Eve had nothing to do at all with this wide field and the stones scattered over it like card-markers, white stones, gray stones, broken columns, stones broken out into fat, silly cherubs, stones that said "Rest in Peace." Eve was somewhere else. *Yes? Where?*

She tried to imagine, wearily.

A sort of celestial crèche, huge as human grief, aseptic as a dentist's fingers—white tiles, and the smell of disinfectant, and animals stenciled on the walls. A day-nursery in Eternity, served by white-winged nurses, where, through time that had no beginning nor could have an end, lost orphans played with divine toys, miraculously happy, never growing up, not sure until their parents found them that they were really dead——

Her mind recoiled from the fancy, shaken with fatigue and disgust. She recalled, for some reason, one of the times when Eve had been pert and peevish and needed spanking. It was that child she wanted. She could almost feel the burden of that child in her body.

She trembled, excruciated past her strength.

And yet Eve was alive. Eve must be alive.

At least she would never need to come here again. Eve was not here, nor had been here. She supposed Shaw would want her to come with him often—it was the right thing to do.

Shaw was saying something about not wanting to hurry her but he was afraid they would have to go back.

Jean arranged the flowers they had brought. Some queer part of her wanted to put them in geometrical patterns, why she did not know. She permitted herself a secret half-smile at Shaw's efforts to arrange the "Suffer Little Children" wreath in a just way so that it would seem to belong to both graves, though she turned her head away when she did so lest he should think it a prelude to hysteria. Then they went back.

She was not comforted, but she knew Eve had never been buried. That was something.

She noticed Shaw looking at her curiously as they turned toward Warren Avenue. Wondering why she had not cried?

She smiled tormentedly. She would cry enough soon enough. Not for him to comfort if she could help, though. And what use was crying?

There had been a dispute about her walking home when they had the car. She saw Shaw giving anxious little glances at where he had left it and persuaded him to take it back and then walk back to meet her. He argued but finally consented. That was better. When he had rattled away she began to walk slowly down past the College

Commons. The mental rebound from anguish came unconsciously. Why this was her first walk alone, outdoors, since she had been out of bed! She picked her way cautiously, for she still had the weakness of the convalescent, but as she went, for the first time since Eve's death, she consciously felt the sweetness of the air.

Then, just as she was hesitating on the street-corner, about to cross, she heard the ripple of running feet behind her, and turned. Two students came running down the slight slope from the Chestnut Street Bridge—bareheaded, in sweaters and tennis-trousers and rubber-soled shoes. They ran easily as runners in a Greek carving, heads up, arms swinging, long legs rhythmic, hair blown by the wind. Neither could have been more than twenty and they were friends, evidently, for they were cursing each other. And as they swept by Jean, dropping into a walk to cross the street and then taking the broad steps of Commons three at a time to disappear into the cool gloom inside, their adolescent swiftness struck Jean in the face like a hand and she thought, for the first time, not of Eve at all but of the child who would have been Eve's brother, the child she had never seen. He would have run like that, been swift like that, been young like that. And he had not lived ten minutes. She started to push her way across the street, tears blinding her.

3.

Grief, in spite of all the medicinal properties ever ascribed to it, remains, nevertheless, a strong poison, and those who are always so ready to recommend it to others as a panacea for various faults in character are like amateur doctors suggesting an overdose of strychnine to cure a weak heart. Grief shared in common may, on occasion, bring two utterly dissimilar people together—but, unless it changes their very entrails, it will not keep them so—and it is just as likely to drive them farther and farther apart. At any rate, the year after Eve's death brought neither healing nor comradeship to Jean and Shaw.

Jean lived through it—and felt herself hardening as she did not wish to harden—not with a protective mail, but brittly like dry earth in a rainless season. She went through the movements of living, at first, with a hate that came within three steps of insanity for the body that would never leave her alone but which had to be washed and dressed and fed each day like a bedridden woman—the body that took pleasure in spite of her in good weather and the feel of clean things and the taste of food.

Then this passed. And with it went a certain trust, a certain interest, a certain elasticity. She found that little, odd happenings interested her no longer. Something had lost its full flavor, like sanded sugar; something had blurred like a pane blurred with steam or breath.

Satire came to her and it was satire without any pleas-

urable touch of mirth but only humor turned vinegar like wine kept too long in the bottle. She received the official condolences of Mrs. Ashley, of Jessie Ashley, of Aunt Amelia Ashley. She replied to the letters, telling her that it was far too good a conundrum to explain while there was any use in explaining it, from the people who had never known Eve except as that nice or that bothersome little girl but felt it a necessary social obligation to write Eve's mother. If she did not answer their polite notes scandalously, it was because she had a sourer rapture of irony in secret, by herself. She hugged that irony to her breast like a poisoned spur—it bit into her mind and rankled and the mind would not be healed. But it was only by reason of such a counter-irritant that she was able to bear the illimitable vacancy of spirit with which the loss of Eve had left her.

She had almost wholly recovered her physical health when they sailed for England in June. Shaw looked at her almost shyly as the liner began to shove its way out into the Hudson and thought with pleasure that Jean, thank goodness, was coming back to normal with astonishing swiftness.

As for their mutual relations—nominally they still remained husband and wife and everyone who knew nothing about it said what a comfort her husband must be to Mrs. Ashley now, with his quiet sympathy and care. Jean knew that a common reckoning must come soon. But when they left America the first numbness of the shock had

hardly passed enough for her to be able to think things out to any conclusion. She could never possibly forgive Shaw for not going for the doctor when she had asked him to on the night when Eve first fell ill. She dealt the situation over and over again like a hand of cards, and thought, tiredly, that she must be unreasonable to feel as she did—other women put up with worse things, doubtless. To her, and to her only, the thing that had happened was so unpardonable that no logic or putting of herself in Shaw's place could alter the fact or her conclusions on it by a hair.

Later she considered various things. Patching up what could be patched and living the rest of her life with a man she could neither love nor respect nor feel anything at all for but a weary contempt. Separating, either quietly, or, if Shaw would not take it quietly, with appropriate pyrotechnics. She did not care about the pyrotechnics one way or the other. She did not care about anything, much, at the moment. She was unutterably tired and empty—and Shaw was hardly any bother, now, at least for the first months in Europe.

For one thing he seemed to be just a trifle afraid of her. It was a queer Shaw that went about with her now, she thought, all the blustering gone like air out of a burst paper bag. She caught him watching her covertly as they sat and ate together politely or conversed politely before going to their rooms at night—the look suspected her of lunatic possibilities. She smiled sardonically—that might be it, she thought.

She remembered the conversation they had had over her refusal to wear mourning after her visit to the cemetery had convinced her that, wherever Eve was, she was not there. She had expected the usual struggle—instead he had given in at once with a somewhat terrified readiness. She had not even had to try and explain her reasons to him. It was restful not to have to explain reasons to Shaw any more.

They spent the summer in London and Oxford—Shaw buried in libraries most of the time. Jean, thrown back upon herself, returned to the habits of the time when she had been ostracized at St. Xavier—books, lonely walks, her own thoughts. She was never happy—though sometimes she dreamt of Eve alive—but she managed to tire herself enough through the day to allow her to sleep. Her beauty came back to her but she had ceased to hate her beauty, even for its smooth aspect. As well wear that mask and live in that lay figure as in any other.

Summer passed—autumn—soon it was a year since Eve had died. Shaw had finished his work in England—his Sabbatical year ran out the following September—now he wanted to go to Spain. There were archives that had hardly been explored, early documents that had never been gone over properly. He trembled a little internally, like a tuning-fork, at the thought—the manuscripts, the sharp, informative notes in his clear handwriting, the shrewd swiftness with which he would draw, from what other men had overlooked, conclusions not to be shaken. Jean agreed, indifferently; all places were the same to her now, as they are to

a blind man or a prophet. Something stirring and fugitive in her mind told her that this existence by segments could not endure much longer—a decision must be come to somehow—a breaking off—a new beginning that could be no less than curious by reason of the circumstances that forced it—but while the present lasted she accepted the present and spent her time with herself and a few memories.

Madrid interested her more than she thought it would. Some of it was so much the comic-opera she had imagined from pictures in geographies—somber-eyed girls with lace mantillas—a square with a falling fountain—belled mules and barefoot monks—thin, rank cigarettes—beggars and fleas and churches and ruin and sun. That was there, that part of it, with a startling, theatrical unreality—as she felt when walking the streets, one eye cocked for the lounging men who would try to slip into her hand little pieces of paper with florid Spanish compliments printed upon them. But there were also street-cars and incongruous men in sack suits and derby hats, and tourists, a good many too many of them, lured down like flies at the promise of warmth in “Sunny Spain” and so shivering around underheated hotels in sweaters and wool mufflers. These last amused her—they reminded her so of the people who used to stay at the Belle View.

In fact, Madrid reminded her amicably of Georgia in a dozen intangible ways, the pleasant, smiling, brownish people, the alternate laxness or sharpness of the air. The first strangeness of it passed quickly, and winter passed also,

and spring came, and she settled down, more or less, to a life more indolent in many respects than any she had yet led, and yet, in other ways more nervous, for she had begun to feel a desire for company, and as Shaw was submerged in his work, she took her company where she found it, often with a carelessness that showed how much the discrimination and aloofness that had always been such dominant forces in her had weakened during the past year.

They were staying at a large, cheap, second-class tourist hotel and the winter guests divided into two classes. The first of those whose respectability and dullness were equally obvious—a couple of single Englishwomen, about forty, the sort who are always reasonlessly wandering the continent of Europe without ever knowing more than a dozen necessary phrases of any foreign language—two Swedish students of agriculture—a retired American naval officer who spent all his days in his room reading weeks-old home newspapers and compiling elaborate batting averages of the Three-Eye League—a paralyzed Russian lady in a wheel-chair who gobbled like a duck—the nurse of the latter—and so forth, and so forth. Those who fell into the second class had something about them that suggested slightly-soiled underclothes and a habit of always holding rather too good cards—the men were flashy when prosperous and limp when unlucky—in either case they were generally a little smeared with cigarette ash—the women had dyed hair, paste jewels and macaw voices. Still the latter class was, on the whole, the more amusing.

The best of the lot was a British remittance man about thirty-five—he had resigned from the army after the unfortunate resurrection of a previously discarded Ace of Spades in a friendly game. Only the shell and appetites of what used to be called a sporting gentleman were left of him now—but he kept his manners except when too much in liquor and could be rather entertaining in a damned sort of way.

Jean played with him after a fashion, rebuffed his occasional attempts to make love to her with a weariness that seemed to make him more alive than anything else could by the annoyance which it caused him; but never trusted him with money or any sort of a secret. Under these conditions he served well enough for an occasional companion—as even a pet spider might be a comfort in prison—and if, at times, this and what other occupations she found to help her get through the days seemed to her ineffably, dustily useless, without body or taste, her spirit was still too lethargic, after its shocks, for her to be quite sure whether she cared now or did not care.

At least she could understand her father now better than ever before. At times she felt, even, with neither horror nor awe, with only a sort of stupor of mind, as if that desiccated man were living his last days over again in her body. She could see why he had wasted those days.

She grew nervous and strange, easily affected by changes of weather, by tiny, irritating incidents, by sounds and smells she disliked. Sometimes she would spend long hours, staring, with her hands in her lap, or before a mirror, not

thinking, merely feeling something dull and quiet envelop her like a sticky covering, like heavy, soft swaddling-clothes upon a child too weak to complain. Something was gone, but she knew no more what it was than how to recapture it. What was it, she wondered, staring at her face. The face looked calm enough. But she was not calm. Trying to remember Eve, gave no solution. That part of her had lost, temporarily, its first sharpness of response—like a nerve saturated with pain it replied to her will no longer. Nothing replied. She was alone—submerged in a spiritless anesthesia where every scent and taste and color of life seemed indifferent and lukewarm.

Then she would grow worried over nothing—hurry out to do something, anything, as long as it was action—wander through churches and galleries, hardly knowing what she saw—play stupid bridge with the Swedish students and one of the Englishwomen for tiny stakes—try to take an interest in Shaw's researches—go out with the Englishman for tea or to dance—unsatisfactory experiments in killing time that left her as they found her, purposeless. She had a fit of writing letters to friends in St. Xavier but when the answers came it seemed hardly worth while to open them. Her odd acquaintanceship with the Englishman continued simply because it was now too much trouble to drop it, and it was through him that she first met Hugues Parette.

A wealthy enthusiast for automobile racing had offered a prize of twenty-five thousand francs to the winner of a race from Paris to Madrid, providing the distance be covered

within a certain time-limit which, considering the state of the Spanish roads, gave little allowance for repairs. Still, the prize was large, and a fair field started—the Englishman had a bet on the result—he generally had a bet on anything from the Derby to the temperature—and he infected Jean with a little of his own enthusiasm as he came to her with reports of progress four or five times a day.

“I’m backin’ Parette, you know,” he explained, as the time-allowance waned and waned. “Little black devil—de Palma himself can’t beat him when he’s on! Saw him smash in the Grand Prix last year—killed his mechanician and got a cut in his head they had to put five stitches in, but the little beggar crawls out from under his car where it was lookin’ like a broken sardine-tin and the first thing he wants to know is if he can carry on. ‘I’ll catch ’em! those flies,’ he said, ‘if they’ll fix up this box of mine and make it gaz, I’ll catch ’em,’ and he could have, too, if there’d been any wheels left to go round. He’ll break his silly neck to be first this time—I put up a monkey on him—got 7 to 4, and if he doesn’t score I’ll be leavin’ this charmin’ *maison* for God knows where!”

Jean was sitting outside a café with some transient Americans that afternoon when the Englishman, who had gone out for news, came back flushed and excited.

“He’s done it, by Peter, he’s done it, the dear old thing!” he sputtered at Jean from six tables away. “Fizz for us all to-night, Mrs. Ashley! Two hours under the time and the next chap twenty miles behind! He’s comin’ up this way

now to deliver a letter to the Tourin' Club—be damned if I don't think he'll go over afterwards and call on the King!"

They waited, the Englishman absorbing brandy-and-soda like an Englishman in a play, and then, down the street, there were cries and the noise of a crowd.

It is never hard to collect a crowd in Spain—and this one was cheering the winning driver as they would have cheered a matador or a bull who had gored a matador. Jean found it grotesquely moving-picturesque—the crowd, and the people standing on café-chairs to shout and wave, the dusty car with its huge number, the wind-burnt mechanic and the startling boy at the wheel.

She saw why the remittance-man had called him a little, black devil. He was slight and pliant as steel cord; olive-swarthy with wind-ruffled hair that seemed black and soft as fur. He was keenly, vivaciously good-looking, too—the nonchalant good looks of a running hound. A rapid face—a face never to be content that any creature on earth should outrun its body—that she could see.

But more than anything else he seemed astonishingly young and astonishingly happy. He grinned all over at the crowd—a dirty grin of infinite pleasure—and waved his hand and called out remarks in atrocious Spanish till he reminded her of a little boy in his first pair of trousers. The whole victorious passage took less than three minutes—the last of the crowd was beginning to drop off into cafés and rest for the next two hours from the exertion of cheering, over one drink and innumerable cigarettes,

when Jean was brought back, from wondering how old he was and deciding he couldn't possibly be over twenty, by the Englishman's touch on her arm.

"The keen little devil!" he said, with somewhat brandied affection. "The keen little devil! Looks, too, eh, Mrs. Ashley?"

"He certainly is a child."

The Englishman laughed.

"He's twenty-five, dear lady, and he's bumped around all over Europe and the States—left a trail behind him, too, that stout little lad. Speaks English a good deal better than most Americans—sorry—won't you have some fizz?"

But Jean declined curtly and started walking back to the hotel. Dinner and Shaw. Dinner and Shaw, and the face of that boy in the car, so vivid with life, so recklessly sure that life would always be a thing that could be lived swiftly and to the last shaking extremity of the blood. If he—She blinked at herself, with some surprise. Had she come to be the kind of married woman tired of her husband that improvises lollypop-romances over the first good-looking boy she sees in the street? Why, she would never see him again, in the first place—and he was a professional automobile racer—and Gabriel Keene had been a night-clerk——

"Jean, dear, you do seem to lack class-consciousness," she said to herself, and smiled. But the smile was untrue and satire seemed to have filled her mind like brackish water as she went along towards the hotel and dinner and Shaw.

4.

She saw him again two days later at a night-club where she had gone with the Englishman to get away from Shaw. Shaw had had a look in his eyes that evening that she knew—a look she disliked no less because it was Shaw's idea of the gentlemanly way to express passionate affection. But the heat and the smoke and the general air of gimcrack gaudiness were beginning to play on her nerves like fingers over a drum, when the Englishman, who had left her for a moment, came back with a slight, dark boy in evening-clothes.

"Mrs. Ashley—Monsieur Parette," he said, with a flourish. He was rather, though not unpleasantly, vinous.

The boy bent over her hand. Then, without seeming to realize that he had not even spoken to her, he took her gently into his arms and they started dancing.

At first she thought that he was as drunk as her English friend, but she looked at him steadily when they had gone a few steps and his eyes were as clear and solemn as a baby's, except for a dancing impertinence that flickered in them like foxfire. Also he danced both well and trickily, and Jean was so out of practise that it took all her attention to follow him. When the music stopped, he released her and nodded as if to say, "Yes, that is just what I thought."

"Do you like this place?" he said in English a little too careful to be native to him.

Jean had a queer feeling that she was meeting Gabriel Keene all over again. That was said as Gabriel would have said it—but this man was more alive than Gabriel. He was more alive than anyone else in the room—even in dancing with him she had felt a certain pitch of life go from him that made her realize how half-alive the rest of them were.

Jean looked at the shoddy gorgeousness around them—people chasing their pleasure around and around the floor with such difficulty, solemnity, liquor and sweat—runners trying to run up into the air to catch a bird.

“No,” she said.

“Well?”

“Oh, anywhere where it’s cool.”

It was a liquid night they passed into when Monsieur Parette had got away from his friends—black and silver as a lake with moonlight on it when the moonlight seems only a brighter and heavier kind of water. They stood for a moment in the doorway, tasting the soft freshness—Hugues threw his head back, suddenly, till his back bent like a willow rod, and breathed in the air with all the strength of his body.

“That is better, is it not, Mrs. Ashley?” a little anxiously. She nodded.

“Much.”

They started along.

“You are American, Mrs. Ashley?”

“Yes.”

"I have been in America. Two years ago the last time."

They talked about that for a while—a little dice-game of light, unimportant words that showed each won or lost with the same frivolous unconcern. The moonlight ran on the dark side-streets and sleepy houses, fluid and shining. The air touched them. Jean began to feel singularly happy.

The last street they followed ended in a *cul-de-sac*—a small, flagged court with a wall at one end, black and quiet as a shallow well, packed with blocks of darkness. Moon lay across it in one broad streak like a bar of white metal. Hugues flung up one hand with an exclamation like a boy's at the sight of the stars above them, near and huge.

"Walls are stupid," he said. "Shall we climb it——"

"Oh, well—" said Jean.

It was a low wall and he handed her up it as into the saddle of a thin, gigantic horse. Then he swung up beside her.

There was a garden on the other side of the wall—a dwarfed, little, pleasant garden with a sinuous path that had, in the moonlight, an air of amiably fatuous self-importance. A window was lit, far up in the house at the end.

"Where Pantaloon lives. He is sitting up in a nightcap waiting for his beautiful daughter to come home. But I am with his beautiful daughter," said Hugues, gravely, gesturing. Jean smiled.

They did not know each other—there would be no more touching of lives between them than this—how should there

be any more? Yet, sitting there, on that gaunt, long rib of stone, in the dripping moonlight, the air that he carried with him, like a flower between his teeth, about her now—impalpable and poignant as the color of twilight, as the smell, perhaps, of that foreign and ardent flower—she knew this man. Not as a typewriter knows the individual oddities of the machine he works with, as she knew Shaw, nor with the sense of probing into explosive substance which she had felt with Gabriel; but wholly, and with an utter seclusion of intimacy; as if the blood that ran in the subtle, accomplished hand with which he gestured ran through her too, and returned to him, not hers or his, but hers and his a clean element, a new creation like a defiant child.

The child is not his parents nor their mere multiplication, though he carry their differing seed in his reins like grains of gold. So now with them—or so Jean felt with a visionary wisdom. There were not two people sitting there—there was one—and yet there were two—and the two mingled and fought together and were at peace in a strife like the strife between those immortal shapes of passion that men have called gods, that descend on the wasted mind like gods taking flesh—those shapes whose love and whose hate are equal, and burning powders. She did not know how long they had been sitting there when he slipped down from the wall and began to play with his shadow and the shadows of the little trees in the garden below her.

She realized what he was doing from the first few steps he took—a delicate, grotesque parody of all the romantic

business of Spanish courtship as known to light-opera and Anglo-Saxon writers of colorful fiction—the drowsy beauty above at the barred window, the so-picturesque cloaked figure below, with the guitar. It was all in pantomime—a dumb-show played in two colors, black and silver—he, melancholy-dark in the deep shade, or, a little more hopeful, fawn-dappled by flakes of moon, his fingers jangling the imaginary guitar-strings of his hat. She, primly attentive, seated in the dull silver, refusing always—while no one heard, for there was nothing to hear.

She flung herself into the comedy as she had not been able to do in any play for longer than she could remember—exaggerating slow courtliness and drooping languor, while he postured below her to suit his fantastic taste. She had no more consciousness of being her age or her present self. She was the Jean Huguenot that had worshiped voodoo and driven Ricky Cotter to desperation and been too kind for her own safety to Gabriel Keene. And with it all her will stayed cool and masterful as a cool acquaintance. Her power had come back to her as it might to a poet after years of writing trash—as she posed, she sat elsewhere, also, stiff as an effigy, and the sandstreams of creation flowed about her, collapsing pillars of bright dust, and she sifted the radiant atoms between her hands.

She could see that the vigor of his own pretense had mastered Hugues completely—he was not clowning now—his eyes were serious, the mockery had left them, they were hot. His face asked. At last he stretched his hands to her as to

some miraculous apple at the end of a high bough, moon-silvered, willing it to fall.

She made a conventional gesture of refusal, whimsically calm. Then, in a second, he was up on the wall beside her like a cat—she saw his face near, eager, amorous and hungry, somehow beloved—his arms reached for her—and she gave him a calm little push that made him struggle desperately for balance, and then slipped down on the other side of the wall.

Turning in the middle of the court she curtsied to him with gentle, aloof politeness, her heart loud in her ears and a suffocating laughter possessing her mind.

The thread that had bound them together a little for those instants like a thread of light glass broke into a thousand pieces. Its tiny, derisive fragments tinkled to the ground.

He sat on the wall like a boy caught stealing apples, palms flung outward with an expression of ridiculous, hurt surprise. "Thank you so much for a very pleasant evening!" she said, in an amiable way.

He did not reply at once. The surprise died out of his face and then she could see his lips go back from his teeth.

"Oh, you, you, you!" he sputtered. "You, you, you! *Toi! Farceuse! Escroc! Je m'en fiche—je m'en—*" and he went off into spitting blasphemous French.

Jumping down from the wall, with no attempt to touch her, for he was too annoyed, he harangued her for some minutes as if she were the Chamber of Deputies. He spoke

far too fast for her to catch half of what he said—she noticed "*demain*," "*demain soir*," and then, in English, "I will see you to-morrow night or I will kill you dead!" all propriety of grammar or accent vanished in an excited screech. Then she was drawing him back, like a rebellious fish, along the way they had come, slowly enough, for he was still talking and talking and she knew that he was pleading with her and calling her abominable names in the same breath. Occasionally he would try and grab at her too—attempts she rejected with a rather desolate equanimity, for, suddenly, she felt weary as a ghost of all that. Then he would talk rapidly again, while she hardly heard, feeling ever more and more ghostlike except for that inexplicable, burning laughter that played in her mind continually like fire in a gem. They came out into the street of Jean's hotel, feet dragging.

"Good-night, Monsieur Parette," said Jean, affably, and offered her hand.

He looked as if he wanted to bite it, but didn't.

"A *very* good night!" he said, with childishly bitter emphasis. "*A swell night! A demain!*"

Then he had turned and was walking away from her, long legs and discouraged back.

Jean punched the bell for the night-porter. Then her laughter took her.

She was still smiling as she went upstairs. But the ghostlike feeling had vanished, and, under the laughter, she was conscious of something new and curious, something

warm that she held close to her heart like a seed or a child. She turned it over speculatively, with a timid kindness. It might grow, very possibly, into something strange and tall. Into something incredible as the body's resurrection. But, for the moment, it felt good to keep it so—small, helpless, weak as a tired child.

For an instant she saw her life as a whole, like a geometrical figure—and saw that it was not a whole, nor anything that had found its completion yet, but the bough of a tree that had been tied down to the ground with strings. Now, with every step she took, the strings creaked and loosened. Soon they might give completely and the bough swing into the air again, to live or die as the weather chose, but at any rate to live as had been intended before there were gardeners. She had finished with gardeners.

The mood held through the next morning, and when Shaw came in for his usual grumble about the inefficiency of Spanish methods of cataloguing she saw him suddenly in her mind with a hose and a patent sprayer and laughed at a joke he told her with such unexpected heartiness that he asked her if his tie were queer.

5.

"You belong to me, Jean Ashley."

"I belong to myself, Hugues Parette. I'm tired of being a toy dog."

"But my God, my God, I belong to you as I've never

belonged to anybody! I belong to you as I've never belonged to myself! I belong——"

"Now Hugues——"

"*C'est vrai. C'est ridicule, peut-être—mais, alors, c'est vrai.* Never before. Never with the same—what do you call it in your stupid language?—wholeness. Never so that everything pretty I see around I want to give you and everything that is funny I want to tell you and see your nose curl up like a little cat's and hear you laugh—*ce rire si beau, si frais, si—never——*"

"Oh, Hugues, Hugues, don't talk like a page of the *Vie Parisienne*!"

"All right. Very hard but very—oh, efficient. Like a business man with a telephone. Allo. Allo. *On ne répond pas? Mais, écoutez! Allo! Jean Ashley?*"

She can't help smiling at his look of worried humor.

"*Oui. Qui parle?*"

"Madame Ashlee? *C'est Monsieur Parette qui parle.* Hugues talking, Mrs. Ashley. Just got five minutes before I must go out to lunch with Mr. Smith to eat such a lot of heavy food and sign a contract. We Americans are always signing so many contracts. Well, Jean.

"Life is a farce, *hein?* But I belong to you. And you're the first person in this bad hotel of a world that I've ever belonged to, in spite of the others—*ces femmes si douloureuses!* And you don't know just now whether you belong to me or not, because you are afraid of me, a little, and of yourself, a little more. But I think you do.

"Well, now, love. My God, love! and my five minutes are finished and Mr. Smith is too busy ever to be late for an appointment. But love.

"You have never had love, Jean. Real love—not as the English say it but *le vrai Pernod—le véritable*. *Nous pourrions ensemble étrangler ce perroquet bizarre*, Jean. The love that is hungry and thirsty and full of hell. My God, the little moons on your finger-nails are better than all Paris! The love that devours body and soul together as a gentle fierce beast eats a flower, and the beast is never satisfied but stays always more fierce, more gentle, and the flower keeps springing always and is never destroyed. I can give you that love, that way—and for as long as I can—and after that it will not matter because I will be dead.

"You will have something to think about except how soon you will die when you are old, Jean. Something nearly all the fools in this world of fools are too damn scared to take.

"We can have all that much together, Jean, I tell you. All—and you know it. My heart hurts when I think of you—hurts me—hurts me—*listen, you child, you deaf, you frozen ice-cream!* You *will* listen! I tell—I say—O God, what an image! I hate you! You make me happy any way you look! And I love you—love you——

"Oh, Jean, *je ne peux plus!* Oh, Jean, I'm in hell! Be pitiful and help me! Be pitiful and help me! Be——"

"Pas libre, monsieur, le numero n'est pas libre!"

6.

Shaw and Jean are saying good-night at the door of Jean's room. They kiss very little now, even in public; a cousinly hand-shake generally does for greeting and fare-well. This evening Shaw holds the hand that is extended to him longer than usual. There is feverishness in the solid, capable palm.

"Jean—I'm getting pretty near the end of my work here now, you know."

"That's good, Shaw."

"I was thinking—we might go back to England for the summer. Play around. I'll be rather free."

"As you wish. When were you thinking of sailing?"

This is going to be a ticklish business. Shaw has realized that from the first. Still during the last six weeks an irritation and a resolve have been growing up together in him. Now his mind is completely made up.

"There's something I'd like to talk to you about, Jean." (Might as well be gentle at first.) "Do you mind?"

"Why no, Shaw."

She throws open the door of her room and stands aside to let him go in, which he does rather stiffly. He sits down uneasily on the bed and plays with his fingers a while. She does not take the chair nearest him.

"Well, Shaw?"

"Women like to be mastered" is another article in Shaw's

hearsay creed. He decides to put the matter bluntly, after casting an insecure look at the unlocked door.

"I'll be frank, Jean. I wanted to talk to you to-night because I'm pretty sick of this present situation between us. I want it stopped."

The words are firm enough but the voice is Shaw's classroom voice calling for discipline. Jean hardens instantly.

"I think you're right, Shaw. The best thing for us to do would be to separate. I've seen it coming for a long time."

Shaw gasps a little. "Separate?"

"Separate. We've tried years and years of it and we haven't made a go. Now we've got where there's no use pretending. I don't want any money from you—I've got my own income and it will keep me till I find something I can work at. If you want to divorce me——"

Shaw's mouth shuts down with a snap.

"I'll never divorce you."

The conversation is not going as he intended it should. Already he feels anger beginning to sting him like prickly heat. Divorce her. When he had come into the room to forgive and take her back—a sentimental recollection of a play he saw his freshman year comes to him—with open arms.

"Very well—I don't insist on a divorce——"

Insist. The insolence. He gets up and begins to walk up and down the room, playing tame tiger. The words sputter out of his mouth, no longer collected now, no longer considered.

"I won't divorce you. You married me and you're my wife. I've put up with more than most husbands put up with already, but that doesn't change things! I've been pretty forbearing, I think, ever since Eve's death——"

The last unhappy words strike Jean perfectly cold—a froze cold, calm and deadly as a frozen weapon.

"So that was why you wanted to talk, Shaw?"

He has thrown off pretense, comes closer. Her lips begin to snarl.

"Yes, it was. And we won't separate and I won't divorce you. You're my wife and you're going to be my wife in the future—and it doesn't matter a damn to me whether you like it or not!"

For a moment a reasonless, inherited terror holds Jean motionless. She crouches a little—her mind has a sudden and glaring picture. A woman in a room in a captured city, running around and around the walls like a rat trying to get out of a sugar-bowl, intense with fear. Then she knows that Shaw's arms are about her and that his lips have taken hold of her. She beats her hands against him, struggling and whining.

"Let me go!"

"No. Not until you say you'll be my wife again. No. No."

They fight like wrestlers, both gasping, for a long, horrible moment. Then there is a flash of cunning in Jean's brain, and before Shaw knows what has happened she has tripped

him so that he stumbles, and she is out in the corridor, her hand automatically smoothing her dress where he has crumpled it, her eyes bright and fierce.

"You are never going to touch me again, Shaw."

He walks toward her unsteadily, like a drugged man.

"We'll see about that. We'll see."

"You are never going to touch me again."

Their eyes clash but Shaw's sink first. She does not move an inch to let him pass—his coat brushes her dress as he goes to the door of his room. At the very door he turns waveringly—his face burning, his breath coming thick still from the struggle. Again their eyes meet—and his fall again. There is a slouch to his shoulders as that heavy rear disappears. A door slams peevishly.

7.

"You ought to be in Paris, Hugues."

They are walking along Park Lane about three o'clock of a burning afternoon, made only bearable by the cool, shut fronts of the houses, drowsing away with closed eyelids under the heat. London in mid-August with "everyone out of town."

"I know. There is the Grand Prix still—and the car will have to be tuned up like a grand piano—she is stubborn, like you—and those savages of mechanics don't understand her. But you are here."

"Well——"

"But when I don't see you I have bad dreams at night." The voice is simple and childish—it reminds Jean so of Eve's voice for a second that it touches her with intolerable pity.

"I can't breathe without you, Jean Ashley. Won't you, won't you?"

"But it isn't honest, Hugues."

They walk on, hardly noticing where they are going. Jean thinks for an instant of Shaw at the British Museum doggedly eating his way through piles of papers. Of the fact that life between the two of them, now, is only an incessant duel, as bitter as a duel between two women. It got pretty bad last night. Pretty bad. Pretty bad.

She had hoped to reason Shaw out of it. That's no good any more.

Unfaithfulness. Breaking of trust. But when there isn't any trust? Words—dozens of them—meaningless as a whisper heard in sleep.

Here lies J. H. like a counterfeit penny.

She kept her trust when there wasn't any.

She smiles—wishes she hadn't—Hugues looks gay at once. Rather painful to keep hurting him so, without any end, any semblance of end. Yes, what one might easily call painful.

Shaw's right. Ah, what says that important document, the American Constitution, or is it the other thing, regarding rights, life, liberty and——

Hugues is so much more of a boy than Shaw ever could have been. And, with respectful acknowledgments to everyone's aunt, including the Scandinavian, so much more of a man.

"Jean Ashley, I love you! Belong to me, Jean Ashley."

She tries to look at Hugues with those eyes of casual irony with which she has measured everything in the world since Eve's death, like a bored man looking over an exhibition of third-rate pictures. Straight nose. Round chin. The dark eyes, earnest and troubled, asking her, asking. The dark fur of hair, brushed smooth. And then——

And then she realizes that Hugues, as Hugues Parette, is something she will never be able to see detachedly any more. Again she has that sense of something suddenly fallen upon them like glittering snow, something invisibly enormous and beyond all comprehension strange, that is drawing them closer and closer to each other like paper figures in the slots of a toy theater—something pressing them together and together till they can have no more separate identity than two raindrops that have suddenly touched and run into one. She can dissect all the circumstances through which this force has operated coldly enough with her mind—but that does not matter. She may say that she will not obey and keep her word—that is possible. But meanwhile Hugues is life—and you cannot get away from life except by dying.

"Some time, Jean Ashley? Some time, Jean Ashley?"

"Maybe."

8.

"We're sailing on the third for America. I'm tired of this nonsense."

"Yes."

"What's the matter with your door? I want to talk to you."

"I've locked it, Shaw."

"If you choose to keep up this farce any longer, I warn you— Let me in, I tell you, let me in!"

"No."

"I'm your husband."

"No."

"If you don't I'll break it down!"

"No."

"Oh, go to hell!"

"I'm in it, I think, Shaw."

Silence.

9.

Jean waited the next morning until she had heard Shaw go out. Then she went through her bag and discovered that she had only five pounds in cash. She tried to think how much was left in her personal account at Whitney. About three hundred dollars, she imagined. She would see if they would not cable it—it would be enough to get her home, if she traveled cheaply, and leave her a little over, too, for the

first weeks of looking for work somewhere. She did not know to what extremes Shaw might proceed when he found she had left him, but she imagined that, knowing him as she did, they would not include publicity. A scandal would hurt his reputation a good deal too much.

She dressed swiftly—she would have to start making arrangements at once. Then she remembered. Hugues was trying out a car for an English friend, he had said—she had promised to meet him and motor down into the country for lunch and a couple of hours afterwards. That, at least, she would take.

She tried on a couple of hats, trying to remember, dully, which Hugues had liked best. Hugues. It seemed a pity that Hugues should have come now. Life was an Indian giver, pushing the thing you most wanted casually into your hands when you couldn't take it. Hugues.

To be free of the burden. To live a few years with your lover. To be clean again.

She had passed her time for adventures.

She looked out of the window. The heat had faded—it would be perfect, motoring. After that she would have to tell Hugues that he must go.

A reaction of exhilaration came over her as soon as she met him. She dropped into a happy, mischievous mood. They talked with gipsy inconsequence all the way going down to the little town where they were to lunch, and scandalized the landlady of the defiantly British inn by their lack of dignity and proper tourist awe. Hugues ordered wine—

light, dry Anjou—and they feasted. Jean gave herself utterly to the moment—trying, she thought half-frantically, to eat each second as it passed and feel it absorbed into her forever—something she could always remember. Something into which she could sink cool fingers, when she was tired or weak, and find it the same stone always, like a turquoise drowned in a pool—the same indestructible gallant jewel of the water, the same frozen windpuff of blue. She noticed, though, that whenever Hugues stopped talking the gaiety ran from him like water and his face set into tense, swift lines as it might in the last laps of a race. The afternoon was passing—it was time to go back—and she hated her cowardice, for still she had not told him. Maybe it would be easier, in the car.

They took a different road, returning, and drove, it seemed to Jean, for an interminable time. All the talk had gone out of both of them—Jean sat quiet, knowing only that again, and for the last time, something had called to her out of life with the call of a heron at evening—and that she had not answered—and the call was dying away. Presently it would cease, and not come again.

She looked at Hugues—his face was as white as a vanilla eclair and nearly as expressionless, as he coaxed more speed out of the car. That was there, now. In a day, in a few hours, it would be gone, and leave her with thirty more years at least to live, since she was so healthy of body. She saw those years—a long row of hollow little shells of pastry that broke under her teeth with a sharp, crumbling, futile sound.

She would tell Hugues as soon as they came to the next turn in the road.

The car slewed around the curve and turned down one arm of a crossroads. There was a sign at the crossroads—letters and a pointing finger. Jean read it automatically. "Dover," it said.

A dozen impulses and speeches fought each other in Jean's mind. She opened her mouth to speak—and closed it again. With curiosity and wonder, with even, for a moment, a tiny, mild despair, she felt herself change slowly in will and purpose—a gradual, calm, dispassionate alteration of spirit, inexorable as strange. The car moved: what she thought she had been till now lay crumpled at her feet, a discarded costume. She did not think, particularly—she knew only that she was released—as a man does when he wakes from weeks of long sickness, and feels his skin cool again, and knows that he can see and hear.

Neither spoke for a couple of miles. Then Hugues turned toward her—his eyes black as ashes.

"I am running away with you," he said painfully. "Couldn't stand it."

"I know."

She put one hand on his arm and felt all the tight muscles relax. The car went faster. There was nothing but that touch to bind them, light as dandelion-seed; but now it seemed to both as if they had only the one body. Body of silence and rest.

It was Jean who broke the silence, later. Like a wise brat she took the first words that came.

"Oh, Hugues, dear!" she said. "And the only clothes I have are the ones I've got on!"

10.

"Sleepy, Jean?"

She nodded. He rose—he had been half-lying, half-sitting on the floor beside her—and kissed her, smiling a little.

"*Bien*. Go. And say if there's anything you can't find."

He still looked at her, she thought, as if she were somewhat unreal. Well, she did that, too. She smiled and passed into the bedroom, undressing with luxurious slowness, thinking of the last two days. Not really two days, either, only some thirty-six hours. Incredible.

Dover—their curiously shy dinner there—the Channel—the train—Paris—Hugues's apartment—being tired to death but not minding—playing together. Love.

All day the certainty had grown—that certainty so un-called-for and complete. A certainty that whether what she had done were right or wrong the love between them was true; a safety in Hugues's mere presence such as she had never known. It must be right, this, or there couldn't be that safety. Wrong didn't make you feel safe, it made you feel very tired and never quite clean, as she had felt in the last months with Shaw.

(Infantile reasons, Jean! she mocked herself. And if they are? I don't care—I am tired of reasons—I prefer to live for a while.)

She wondered what Shaw was doing, idly enough. Her letter might have reached him by now. It had said that she was leaving him permanently—he could think out the rest for himself, and would, she knew. There would be neither pursuit nor newspaper headlines if Shaw had anything to do about it. Later, she supposed, he would get a quiet divorce, for desertion or mental cruelty or something like that.

For the first time in a long while she was able to regard Shaw dispassionately. She was sorry that their marriage had been such a comprehensive failure, but, reviewing it, it seemed to her to have had, from the first, few qualities of success. Without Eve the break would have come sooner, and perhaps in a way that might have been much worse for Shaw. Now he could work unhampered—marry again, if he liked—and this time not for beauty. Poor Shaw, he was cured of beauty, she thought, with an ironic gleam.

And for herself?

For herself she did not know—nor make any attempt to prophesy. And yet that ignorance seemed precious to her.

A knock came at the door.

“Jean?”

“Just a minute, Hugues.”

She hurriedly looked at the glass—shook out her hair. It fell nearly to her waist, gold-brown, silky and sparkling.

She wished it were longer. She took a strand of it between her fingers, consideringly. That was Hugues's now. Just as all she had was Hugues's. In spite of her marriage no man had ever taken it—it was all hers, and had never been anyone's before but hers. She could give herself to Hugues not alone wholly but with first ecstasy—give what had never been given before or taken; what no hands but hers and his could touch. And her hands and his were the same.

She felt grateful, unutterably, that it could be so. All the rest meant nothing.

"Entrez, monsieur."

He came in at once, and she saw that his face had been drawn, and that the pinched look vanished the instant that he saw her.

"I was afraid you had gone somehow," he said.

Their lips met, and Jean felt as if she had made herself small as a toy, and put herself utterly into his hands. There seemed no beating of the blood in that double passion—there seemed only intense light and the fire of that light.

They walked over to the window, her arm around his shoulders, and she fumbled with the knob and pulled it open. A gust of freshness came from the courtyard. Beyond, the trees waved softly, a little, in the light airs.

Hugues was kneeling beside her now, his black head pressed against her knees. She could feel his warmth through the thin silk of her nightgown. He bent suddenly and kissed her feet, then raised a face dim as water under pale starlight, haggard with bright desire.

"Oh, Jean, Jean, *aises-moi toujours, toujours, toujours!*" he said in a choking voice.

II.

During the months that followed before August, 1914, Jean adjusted herself to the changed conditions of her life—not without occasional strain. Some things were so wholly different. But they were happy. That took a little adjustment, too. After a while she grew able to take it more casually—to lose in some degree her feeling of being only the most transient of visitors in happiness. But she seldom quite lost it. They say that a man who has starved is apt to have much the same sort of feeling about any kind of food—at least for a long while.

As for other adjustments—it was not that either her previous opinions of life or Hugues's opinions failed in logic in the conclusions drawn from their premises—both were highly developed and civilized affairs, but some of the premises were not so much opposite as different beyond comparison. It was in some things as if she had moved into the fourth dimension and so must revise all her previous conceptions of length, breadth and thickness—or as if where she saw one color as green, Hugues saw it as red.

Her best image for their common life was again of the fourth dimension—a spot of fourth dimension in a three-dimensional world. Or again, romantically but she liked the country, of a small orchard-pleasance near the bank of a stream; a quiet place where evening comes gently, and the

calm odors of earth and air are wet and fresh as the sound of a country brook. White blossom falls and lies hidden in the long, tangled grass—there is a taste of apples and earth on the tongue—the moments are slow and peaceful. When the stars are risen, silver lies on the ground.

This pleasance, then, or so her image went on, was walled up, somehow, in the middle of a large and expensive restaurant, full of creatures in evening-dress, expressionless and pallid as soda-crackers, where a band continually played smart, syrupy music to which nobody listened. Hugues and she would dine in the restaurant, perhaps, and talk to the masks who peopled it, in the squeaky ventriloquist voice that was the custom of the country. They would stroll on the terrace outside where every little marble-topped table was crowded and more masks sat sipping colored drinks and there was a bird-cage chatter of half-words and broken phrases and everything was as bright and unreal as gas-light. And then they would go back, nodding amiably to their friends, the simulacra, and pass into their orchard without a sound. In that orchard they loved.

Desire, proud as Pegasus, silver foal begotten of air on earth. Ecstasy of the body like a burning flower—the mind's ethereal ecstasy, no more illustrious but calmer, idler, more kind. Kindness, uncalled-for, warm as a pleasant garment, mortal and transient. Faith blind as a bat but happy as a gentle madman, and Wit, the satiric unicorn, with his long, curled ivory spear. Heraldic images that lovers make in their idleness, hanging them round the dark throat of Chaos

like a string of carved beads, to mock his air of asphyxiation with bright colors and noble attitudes for a moment serene and brief. They lie on that breast of anger like stiff little dolls—the colors fade slowly—the faces alter. When the rubbish-heap of eternity is sorted by angelic rag-pickers are you going to look for your own string?—you had better not. But neither Jean nor Hugues, being careless people, paid much bastard-philosophic attention to this last consideration.

As regards herself and the external world they visited like the only live men in a city built of paper, Jean made a number of discoveries which she put down, little and great, with a somewhat childish passion for information.

She discovered that she was jealous of and for Hugues in a way that would have appeared to her incomprehensible before she found it in herself. She wanted him to win the Grand Prix—which he did with a neat audacity that brought his name into most of the revues—but when she watched the race it was with her eyes on her program every time that Hugues slashed by the grandstand at incredible speed, and when it was over and Hugues was being escorted away in triumph, she found her knees so deathly weak, on trying to rise, that she had to sit still for five minutes smoothing them before she could get out of her seat.

Again, they were dining at the Café de Paris a couple of nights later with a party of Hugues's friends. She was busy attempting not to show herself too incompetent in following the flashingly rapid conversation of the man beside her—it

was crammed with technicalities and boulevard slang—when a gaudy young South American came in, or rather followed, for he was preceded by a tall, blonde woman as superb and insolent and stupid as a prize borzoi. Her progress to the small *chic* table that had been reserved for them was languidly magnificent and, as she passed the table where Hugues and Jean were, she gave one brief, supercilious nod. Hugues returned it with ineffable politeness but Jean could see his teeth pinch into his lip. The conversation dropped, for a moment only, but completely. Only in the middle of the sudden hush, Jean could hear her own voice going on in rickety French—and she saw all the other men in the company look at herself, and then at Hugues, and then at each other, a second's glance apiece. Jean's sentence stopped.

A lean young man with a beaky nose broke the silence.

"Simone is looking very well to-night," he remarked, detachedly, and again all the men at the table looked for a second at Hugues.

"Very well," said Hugues, his voice clear frost, and the incident ended. But all through the rest of dinner Jean watched the sumptuous cocotte covertly and with a chilly anger, at the woman because she was to be hated and at herself for hating her and making so many unmeaning excuses for Hugues.

This led to another discovery, which was that her position as Hugues's mistress was as clearly, if illegally, defined as it had been as Shaw's wife. And that, in the world of the restaurant and its simulacra, many men, from the bulbous

Jewish banker who offered her a villa at Nice in French with the p's gone wrong, to the long-haired Latin Quarter student to whom Jean gave four francs for a sketch of herself in a café and who promptly repaid her by suggesting a mutual garret and undying fame at the Daub Fair in Montmartre, would try to take her away from Hugues by any means they could think of—and that, too, was perfectly fair and part of the game.

About Hugues her discoveries were many. A large part of his fluctuating income went to his parents who were farmers in a small way in Provence, to his sisters who were being educated for the government examinations for teachers—judged by any standard, even the rigorous French one, Hugues was a good brother, a very good son. His family were rigid Protestants and Hugues was religious in a highly sincere and simple way and yet reconciled their present situation with his indubitable beliefs by merely "*il faut vivre, il faut aimer*" and a gesture. That she found illogical, but pleasant, on the whole.

Hugues was never scrimping about money, but she was by far the more extravagant. He expected much more from her, from love itself to the details of household management, than Shaw had—and gave much more. He had taste—he was widely interested in other matters beside his particular business and the business of love to an extent that astonished Jean. Even about her clothes, in which he took an amazing personal interest, his judgment was nearly always as good and sometimes better than hers.

Hugues managed her when a question of management came up with the delicate ease of a fine fisherman coaxing a canny trout. She liked that, rather.

Hugues was emotional, concise and direct in his dealings with men and women where Shaw had been logical, diffuse and surreptitious. It made a difference.

He was candid. He did not pretend.

"We love each other," he said calmly, one evening, "more than we have loved anybody else before or will again—so we think and say and believe what we say. But it may finish. When it does finish, we shall know. The heart does not stay the same through a life, Jean."

(She wished he had said "if it does finish.")

"But it can, Hugues. Especially if it wants to such a lot."

"*Bien sûr*. If it only does! If only— People change, though, Jean."

(She thought—I ought to be insulted according to etiquette. I'm not. But then if I'm not I ought to be grateful he's so conscientiously truthful and I'm not that either, quite.)

"They don't have to—oh, yes, they do have to, I suppose, but——"

"But, Jean. But that is life, Jean."

The discussion went on for hours without reaching any conclusion, and at the end of it Jean found herself suddenly, ashamedly, in tears. And then Hugues was the perfect lover and all that could be desired.

Hugues's parents wanted him to marry, she found. They had wanted him to marry, now, for four years.

She would never ask Hugues to marry her—and she did not think that Hugues, the inexplicable part of him, at least, would ever ask her to marry him, even if Shaw, from whom no sign came as yet, divorced her.

It was after this conversation that Jean began to live with a sort of reckless carefulness new to her, like a gambler playing for more than he can possibly pay if he loses but, meanwhile, playing with strategy and craft. She realized, with a rather merciless clarity, that she was older than Hugues and that if Hugues's theories worked out in practice and a break between them did come it would break her with it. She took care of her beauty as she never had before and was charmed to see that the more lustrous part of it lived by loving and being loved as pearls live by being worn. The hidden orchard no longer sufficed them wholly. She and Hugues explored Paris from the bookstalls along the Seine to the soap-bubble mosque of *Sacré Cœur* and from the Bois de Boulogne to the Latin Quarter. And the pictures that she stowed away where time could not touch them were living and dim and rich as old altar embroideries.

The Grand Boulevards, green with spring and crowded with all the nations of the earth, not an empty chair in front of the cafés from the Place de la Madeleine to the Boulevard Montmartre. The Seine on a summer night from the Pont Royal with the water one black flowing ripple, spanned by black bridges, figured with long shaking ten-

drills and wavering blots of scarlet and green, streaked silver like a shining fish by the flood of the moon—the Ile de la Cité floating downstream like a great swimming water-beast carrying all that packed heap of jutting roofs and buildings and chimneys on its back like spines. An Easter in Nôtre Dame, half pageant, half indescribably solemn, with hidden, triumphant music, ineffably pure as if it came from a single angelic throat, and the strange, gorgeous figure of the Cardinal Archbishop kneeling before the altar like a gilded statue in the heaviness and glitter of his sparkling robes.

Another Mass, an afternoon at *Sacré Cœur*, when the church was almost deserted and two chubby acolytes in red shirts staggered processionally under great, yellow, dripping candles taller than themselves. Dinner at a cheap restaurant in the Quarter and a man who came in with jumping toys, a bear that walked with a stick, a bicyclist that rode furiously under the tables and made everyone laugh. The rose-garden at Bagatelle, so many single stalks of roses standing alone, so many rose-trees trained to grow sideways that it reminded Jean of the Queen's garden in Alice in Wonderland, and she expected the card-soldiers to appear at any moment with their hedgehogs and flamingoes. The Luxembourg Gardens in the morning, walking with Hugues there, the cries of birds, the children playing by the Round Pond. Hugues's hands on her shoulders, Hugues's lips on her lips. Hugues talking to her. Hugues's eyes, asking, demanding, worshipping.

Sparkling, fugitive, odd, grotesque, pitiful memories, dissolving away from the eye that saw them like smoke, but kept by the mind as if they were buried in amber.

Then, while Jean was unable to see any farther ahead on the road she was traveling than the next curve and the hill beyond it, the war came.

12.

A sound—a slow vibration growing always more rapid—harsh monstrous clamor of a million hammers beating on an iron mountain—iron on iron on iron till the stunned mind grew foolish or grotesque hearing the senseless, gigantic outcry—through four years and three months this sound, sifting its iron atoms through air and water and earth and flesh, heard like a frantic murmur at the back of all minds, at the bottom of all thought—tremendous Folly handling the heavy drumsticks—coloring life like a dye—the noise of an iron drum.

13.

Mobilization—the placards in the streets—the crowds. Hugues was going to fight in this war. That didn't seem real.

Night and day. The last night and day.

The dawn began to make things gray and large. She roused from her light sleep, a little, and sleepily looked at him. His face, in the strange gray paleness, seemed calm

and foreign. Is it really Hugues, she wondered, for an instant.

They did their best to be so terribly cheery with each other. Why did people always do that? Her thought, like a beaten horse, went stumbling a dry, hard road.

Now he was really going. She would have to look at him hard. He looked different in his uniform—unfamiliar. Something hurt her—increasingly—suffocatingly. This scene meant nothing—had no existence—could not have. Yet it was, and she was living it.

It was over. She would have to remember to go back to where she lived. It was bright summer in the streets. The woman who sat next to her in the Métro was crying—crying voluminously into a white handkerchief with a little pink border and a pink initial—S.

She clumsily made herself some tea in the kitchen. It seemed to taste of wet paper but she drank it greedily. Hugues was gone. He would be in a train, now.

She would write him a letter—send him some things. She should have said more—loved more—given more. Next time. Unless.

After she had written her letter she went to bed and to an exhausted sleep.

14.

The next three years or so, for Jean, were wholly given up to unspectacular endurance. Hugues, after the Marne, spent some eight months as chauffeur to various generals,

in positions where he was both safe and irritated. Then, in the fall of 1915, he managed to transfer to the air-service and start training—and after that Jean's whole existence revolved about two things, his rare leaves in Paris, and the long, blurred casualty-lists for all the time that he was actually out of her sight.

Such war-work as she could find to do she gave all the rest of her strength to, and, since her social position was hardly what it had been, the work she found was real, exacting and grubby—concerned rather with helping people poorer than she was to exist at all under the famine-pinch of the war, than being photographed at the bedsides of neatly-bandaged soldiers or wearing puttees. But, for the most part, she simply lived under the war as her neighbors lived, as men live and work in a plague-ridden city, and devoted what energy remained to her at the end of each day to planning surprises that Hugues would enjoy on his next leave.

As the war went on, her practical difficulties increased, and none of them were of the heroic kind. They were little, unreasonable, cramping things, as annoying as tight shoes.

There was the question of her American citizenship, for instance. Hugues had influential friends, and so far he had been able to procure what papers were necessary for her stay in Paris. But she could not tell what further regulations might go into effect. It made drawing on her own small income from America difficult—and Hugues's income had

ceased, except for his army pay. That meant that, since they were prodigal whenever Hugues returned on *permission*, Jean must save every possible *sou* while he was away or he might not be able to have some of the things he liked—they were all increasingly expensive—and each time might be the last time.

It meant they had to leave the apartment overlooking the Luxembourg and take three rooms on a fifth floor in the rue Jacob—a change with which Hugues was highly dissatisfied at first. “We are living like butchers here,” he told Jean, when he came back nervous after an accident. Also there was the fact that out of what money still was left them, as much as possible must be sent to Hugues’s parents—they were old people, and with the war grinding on them needed it more than ever.

It was not that Hugues expected all that Jean gave him, though he came to accept it in time, as people do. She had not expected it herself, and it often surprised her. And, as a consequence, and for a long time she became to him, as he said, “*marraine, Cléopâtre, petite amie, sœur, bonne femme et caisse*,” for she reveled with him, looked after his personal comfort like a grandmother, wrote him volumes in return for his rare highly-censored scrawls—(Hugues never could keep his tongue or his pen still whenever there was anything picturesque to be described)—and acted as expert accountant, business manager and supply officer to all his affairs.

In return for which she got her reward; for, through the

first two years, he was more completely hers than he had ever been, even when he first ran off with her to Dover. His preconceived ideas on love and marriage crumbled gradually under the pressure of her actual helpfulness in every aspect of his present life. In November, 1915, she received a letter from Shaw, forwarded by her bank in Whitney, a letter of three lines, "I am bringing suit for divorce against you on the grounds of desertion. For any further information you may refer to my lawyers, McMeade and Kuttach," and smiled, because she thought it so exactly like Shaw. She put it away in her desk and forgot about it—Hugues had written that it was cold enough to give Jeanne d'Arc's statue chilblains, and would she send him some socks.

But Hugues found it there next February on the morning of a thirty-six-hour leave, as he was rummaging over some papers. He said nothing at the time, but till almost the end of the leave he was even more heedlessly gay than usual.

An hour before they had to say good-by he turned to her suddenly out of a tormented silence.

"Little Jean, will you marry me if this damn war ends without leaving me like *ce vieux Louis, sans cœur et sans entrailles?*" he said clumsily.

She looked at him steadily. A throb seemed to pass over her body like a throb of light. Within her something smiled, something kindly and lightly gay. This meant more

than ceremonies of marriage—it meant he wanted her always. All the days of her natural life.

If they were married they might have children. Her children and Hugues's and peace with them—safety and peace. That hadn't seemed fair before.

"Are you sure, Hugues? Oh, I know it sounds silly asking you, but you know! And your family and what you believe in—and it doesn't matter, really, unless you really——"

"There may be some hard things," he said, slowly, trying to be quite truthful, too. "The family—oh la, la, *la*—they will have their ideas, but if you can bear that—and for what I believe—well, you are what I believe in, Jean, little Jean." He smiled, suddenly. "Madame Parette!" he remarked, appreciatively. Then he jumped to his feet and kissed her.

"Oh, Jean, Jean, Jean!" he said. "As if I would ever be content to marry anybody but you!"

A little while later he suddenly saw that she was laughing.

"What is it?" he said, half-petulantly. "What is it, what is it, what is it? You laugh at such things, you strange creature, and I never know why you are laughing or if it isn't at me!"

She stifled her mirth somewhat.

"Oh, it isn't anything, darling," she said, a little shakily. "It isn't anything at all—only—well—I've had several proposals of marriage at one time or another and I was thinking

that, considering all the circumstances, yours was so very much the queerest!"

15.

It was after Hugues's second accident—a bad one where he had only just managed to land his machine inside the French lines after being twice severely wounded by machine-gun bullets—that Jean began to notice the change in him. He came out of the hospital in March of 1917, and at first she put down what seemed an alteration in his whole outlook to the irritability of convalescence, but, after a day's leave a month later she began to suspect that something was seriously wrong.

All the rest of the year he alternated between two moods—one of extravagant recklessness combined with a certain new blind hardness of speech and manner that seemed completely foreign to him—and one of utter depression, a black *cafard*, when a dumb devil would sit in him for hours and nothing Jean could say or do would please him or make him laugh. Hugues had always liked wine as most Frenchmen like it, for the flavor—now, whenever she saw him he drank in increasing quantities—cognac or absinthe when he could get it—and he never seemed satisfied unless they were drinking or dancing in one of the forbidden dance-halls that flourished secretively, or rushing from one restaurant to another. And then he did not seem really satisfied either, only petulantly active like a sick child.

Their celebrations of his leave degenerated on his part

toward rather dreary orgies through which she had to sit without comment. It was not merely that he was sure to be drunk, now, through the larger part of any *permission* and that she had never seen him drunk before this year,—that she could have understood as a relief from nervous tension—but he seemed to take no pleasure even in that. She grew less and less able even to humor him, do what she would. She could only keep silent and see him with the black dog on his shoulders and his eyes grown strange.

At times she thought desperately that he must be beginning to hate her. When he drank he wanted her to drink, too, now, as much. If she did not he would mock her in front of his friends—if she did, as she tried to once or twice, at her wits' end, he would grin with sour laughter and tell her she was getting reasonable at last.

"The world has burnt up," he told her bitterly in a sober moment. "Pretty soon we will all be monkeys again, biting and scratching—*eh, mon singe?* Little monkeys with no more laws or fine habits than Senegalese. *Alors*, while we can live and be partly human still, we can have pleasure, and the rest does not matter—*eh?*" and he kissed her without delight.

Jean did the best she could to help him but the enemy in his nerves was so obscure that she had no way of telling just what she was fighting or how to fight it, though any *poilu* would have known what the trouble was without being able to give it much of a name or a cure. Hugues had been in the war too long—that was all. His nerve had not gone

yet—in a man of his temperament it would be the last thing to go—but the difference between what he had been and what he was was the difference between an exquisite supple steel blade and that blade with all the spring and temper gone out of it. A twenty-four hours in September did not mend things—Hugues was somberly drunk from his arrival in Paris to his leaving of it.

Jean noticed, too, that when she woke up in the morning it was to find him gone, and he did not come back except to say good-by for a few minutes before catching his train.

He had two more leaves before May of 1918—eight days in all—and only one of the days was spent completely with Jean. Even when he was with her now, she felt hopelessly, dully afraid of what might come, like a man riding along a road at night with a traveling companion and suddenly seeing the familiar face and body change into something inexplicable and the words that rush from the pale mouth become inhuman. She only prayed bitterly for the war to end. If it did—and she could get Hugues away somewhere and rest him——

She heard from several officious acquaintances of the way in which Hugues spent his leaves when not with her. She knew and would not believe.

In the meantime a letter had come from her lawyers stating that Shaw had obtained his divorce. She saw in an old *Whitney Alumni Weekly* that drifted into her possession that Professor Shaw Ashley had accepted a commission as major in the Military Intelligence Department at Washington, pic-

tured Shaw, in a uniform, saluting, and was rewarded by the first real smile she had had for some months. Shaw would have such a lot of pictures of himself in uniform, looking stern. She wondered what had happened to Gabriel Keene. Dead, possibly, though he had always seemed much too alive to die. But now all people and things were dying. Hugues's group had changed its personnel almost completely in the last four months. And a new German drive was expected—and the men on the rivers were dying like winter flies—and the war would never end.

16.

She was always to remember a certain morning in May, 1918. Hugues had left for the front again, two weeks before, after giving her two hours out of his leave that made neither happy, and she had heard nothing of or from him since then.

Every day of the two weeks had thrust her farther and farther down into a black well of lifelessness where she had neither heart nor body any more, till, when an air-raid came in the night, she felt too beatenly tired to go down into the cellar with the other occupants of the house. They might kill her or they might not—the only important thing was not to shiver in darkness with half-dressed men and women and crying babies in a hole below the ground, and at the end to climb those four flights of twisting stairs again. When the raid was over, sheer fatigue came blessedly upon her like ether, and she fell into a sleep, as heavy as death, untroubled by dreams.

It was from this sleep she woke, with bright sunlight streaming over her, and a knowledge as certain as the knowledge of sickness in her own body, that Hugues was dead.

She could not tell how or why she knew. But she was quite certain. The only condition of being to which she could compare it was when once, very long ago, she had lain warm in her bed at Huguenot House, on the morning of her seventeenth birthday, and felt life pour through her body and from it, like sun on earth. Then everything had seemed plain. Now too everything seemed plain. Hugues was dead now—as Eve was dead—as Aunt Eve had died—as all the people to whom she was able to give wholly died, sooner or later, without ever taking her with them.

For the first time she could see no future ahead of her, but the mere continuance in spite of her of the functions of the body, the earth too stubborn to rot, the clay that must be carried about like a dead man's bones forever, till some causeless chance released the mind from the long burden. This time the stroke of grief was too blunt and crushing for stupor. She got up and went about her business, knowing only that everything she passed seemed brilliantly unreal. And two days later the confirmation came.

Hugues had not died, as he might have liked to die, in action. He had been stunting, "for the instruction of some younger pilots," she heard, and had crashed in a mad attempt to loop when he was only thirty feet off the ground.

She was glad, after a fashion, that the end had come so

abruptly. She could not have borne the thought of Hugues's face, set and wretched, as he fell through acres of air, fighting his jammed controls. And later, a pilot on leave, a dark pale boy with that intent nervousness about him which she had come to associate with all the flying men, came with a package—Hugues's leather flying-coat. His other effects had gone to his family, but the boy had heard about Jean from Hugues, and delivered his parcel with a touching gravity. He found a stupid woman who hardly seemed to see him, and accepted his parcel with a strange look of wonder that made him dilate upon the native coldness of *les Américaines*, when he got back, relieved enough, to his friends. If he had known of the call from the gentleman who preceded him, he might have understood.

It was the man who had talked to Jean about motors, that night in the Café de Paris. He and Hugues had had a long-standing acquaintanceship of rivalry, twice one had just managed to beat the other for racing cups, and the rivalry continued during the war, till Maurice Delouge had been shot down early in 1917 and so crippled as to be of no further use in the air. Unlike Hugues, he was a man of independent means, and for the last six months he had been stationed at desk-work in Paris.

He was noticeably polite—Jean observed that. He pronounced a fluent eulogy upon Hugues and all his qualities. And then it seemed to Jean that he was asking her, very tactfully, very unobtrusively, just what she proposed to do now.

He was telling her how much he had always admired her—how hopelessly, he said. He was telling her of a little apartment in Passy that he had taken, and what a ravishing little *bijou* might be made of it. He was hoping that he did not derange her by showing such a very personal interest in her future plans, but, shruggingly, "*Il faut vivre, madame*—and this beast of a war—" He was telling her.

Jean heard him out, feeling infinitely tired the while. He had an aroma about him, she thought dispassionately, the aroma of something at once polite and nasty—the smell of a dahlia, perhaps. When he had quite finished, she said exactly one word.

"*Saligaud!*" she said, without heat, and opened the door.

The epithet did not seem to disturb him. He grew franker.

"You have no money—well? If not with me, with someone else—well? After all—one eats."

He took his departure charmingly, with polish, with elaboration, a clubman, a man of the world.

The next morning a *petit-bleu* arrived. It contained his telephone number and his respectful assurance that he would not "disturb her unreasonably," but that he was always her sincere friend. It also remarked that she was very beautiful.

She started to rummage through Hugues's flying-coat, as an antidote to that small piece of pale-blue paper. Her mind turned dully to practical considerations. The rooms would have to be disposed of—she no longer had the money

to keep them up. After that—what was there? Go somewhere. Stay somewhere. Where? “All dressed up and no place to go,” she thought, reminiscently with a slight and bitter smile.

The smile wore out. It mattered so little any more where she went or what she did. It was bitterly unfair that only men could fight in a war. All women could do was bear, and it was not permitted them to die quickly or with any decency.

How funny! there was a letter in the inside pocket of the coat. Hugues had always been amusingly careless about his letters. One of hers, perhaps. She pulled it out and smoothed it, smiling. Then she read it over three times.

It was written in a coarse, large hand on cheap paper in the bad violet ink of all French cafés. Also it began “*Chéri*” and was signed “*Toujours à toi, ta petite Blanchette.*”

She discovered the address. It was that of a little town she had heard Hugues mention, a couple of miles away from his flying-field.

Blanchette Dubosc, 27, Rue des Ecuries.

The one phrase that had burnt into her eyes like acid kept repeating and repeating itself with the recurrence of slow-dripping liquid inside her brain.

“*Et maintenant, chéri, je suis enceinte, tu sais,*” “*Et maintenant—je suis enceinte——*”

Maintenant was a mistake. It should be *maintenant*. The girl must be a peasant and very poor—no one was rich in those small, broken, northern towns.

Hugues had taken all of her, and now even that was gone. She saw Hugues as he had been this last year, smiling cruelly and spilling water out of his cupped hands to the ground. That was her, too—that water.

If she could get rid of these rooms, that might mean some money and she had a little, too. The girl must have money—it cost so much to give a child the things it needed—things the girl wouldn't know about yet. It wouldn't be any good going to rich people or charities about it—there was more misery than anyone could take care of already in Paris, without anyone's worrying about a child that wasn't quite born yet, somewhere in the North. Hugues's child. They had never had a child, Hugues and she. If the war hadn't come. If Hugues had married her. If——

This last irony, comic and final, was the end. Dreams, hopes, delusions—all the pageant of dust. They disappeared. And with them, strangely without pain, the self that all her life she had called by her name disappeared as well. Having suffered too many changes, she thought, it ceased. She had lost identity.

There remained only, perhaps, the possibility of saving from too much pain something yet unborn of a stock that had been dear to her. Without gestures of nobility and for almost no reason at all.

There remained that only. She must think of that—with what apparatus of mentality she knew not. Herself, as she had known it, was gone.

She wondered idly if the child would have a dark fur of hair and fine hands like Hugues.

If she and Hugues had had a child, that would have made up for everything. Would it? Oh, yes. She would now be alive.

She must make herself get up on her feet and decide something. That horrible girl must be in bad straits by now. She looked at the date of the letter—Hugues must have got it just before he was killed.

Perhaps the girl had killed herself. Not that that mattered; but if she had, she would have killed Hugues's child.

There must be somewhere that she could get money for that child. Money and a letter. "From a Well Wisher." She smiled, painfully.

Then she picked up the *petit-bleu* and read it again. Then the letter from Hugues's pocket—the *petit-bleu*—the letter——

17.

She was surprised to find herself so peevishly impatient with Central, as she tried and tried again to get any response out of the antiquated telephone apparatus in the café across the street. Impatience was normal. Funny. Jokes about telephones in *Judge*—waiting five years for a number.

There.

"Allo. Passy—cent-quatre-vingt-cinq-vingt-treize——"

CHAPTER II

I.

HELL, thought Jean, was not Milton's Pandemonium, a great exhalation of blackness, rising like the noise of a dark organ from measureless depths, towering so high that if its foundations had been rooted in any other place, its spires would have been covered with stars. It was not the burning lake of the Middle Ages, where comic red devils swam about like trout, prodding the naked damned with flexible pitchforks. It was a hot, shut room, full of breath and cigarette-smoke and the smell of bad champagne, a room covered with intertwined red-and-gold crescents from wide sofas to low ceiling, a room where men and women danced incessantly to the squeak of a scratchy phonograph. The women had white faces and lips almost orange in their scarlet—the men's faces were slick and feverish—every man in the room seemed to wear the same pair of eyes, lifeless and gleaming as false eyes on a tray in a doll-shop. There was screaming talk there all the time, that never kept still—she knew the talk now—she could carry it on in her sleep—and the noise of the phonograph kept on, too, through her sleep, till it seemed to her that she was something cut out of hot brittle paper that turned and turned to the sound of cheap music

forever, blown over a smooth floor by a warm and lifeless gust.

Hell was not real nor were any of its inhabitants—if you pulled at them hard they would tear like rotten linen, she imagined. But that did not matter: for she was not real, either. There was nothing left of sensation but a deep staleness, a smell of stale, exhausted earth, infertile and sick. Unceasing.

Hell had even been quite dignified, once, maybe. People lifting their heads from the middle of damnation in happy scorn. But the war had come, and Hell had kept up with the war.

2.

A riotous party in a small, expensive restaurant near the top of Montmartre, after the first liqueurs. Bearded men, bald men, beaky men, young men with their long hair as carefully trained as creepers. The women squawking at the men—their faces changing in an instant from false, busy gayety to sorrow or greed or mere lassitude, whenever their mouths kept silent for a moment. A hand on Jean's shoulder, a damp voice in her ear.

"Sois gentille avec moi, petite Blondy—sois gentille! Je suis au pognon, ce soir—je m'en fiche de Maurice et toutes ces grues——"

Loathing. Loathing like a fog that comes up from a marsh at evening, and wraps land and water in cold, sticky swathings of stuff that creeps on the skin. Unutterable

loathing of herself, and the place, and her companions. Loathing that had come to be such a part of her that it was as if she had made it, like an image made out of clay, and breathed upon it with her life till there was no other life left in her—only that earthy inhuman image that men desired unceasingly—why she did not see.

“Mais comme vous êtes jolie ce soir, jolie comme tout.”

And always at the bottom of that loathing, one picture, the letter that she had taken out of Hugues’s pocket—the straggling lines in cheap violet ink that seemed written over and over across her body. A picture and an unbreakable resolve—the money for Hugues’s child.

Not self-sacrifice. She could not appease herself with that anesthetic. She had now no self to sacrifice—it had gone. There was merely nothing else to do.

The party at the next table are half drunk already. The three fat madams are singing to their red-faced host—solacing his heart with sweet music.

“Une éternité,” the loose oily voices chorus together, *“Une é-ter-ni-té d’A-mou-r!”*

3.

Perhaps you have really found your *métier* after all, thought Jean, when, once, in the middle of this, she discovered herself quite alone. At least you seem to be (she paused) a Success.

Article in a Sunday newspaper, illustrated. How From Poor and Honest Childhood One Woman Rose to——

No. No. It's intolerable. No.

Something shuddered, in the air she breathed or the flesh she wore—inadvisably, continuously crying its weak despair. Some oppressed and painful object wishing any comfortable annihilation. Her?

Indubitably—but the self that had smiled and mocked—that, too, was her. A sense of the ridiculous (she thought) is painfully persistent.

One self. Another self. Simply dozens of them.

There was a young lady who lived in a blur
She had so many selves she didn't know which was her.

That was all thought got you, anyhow. Broken thoughts and mixed-up nursery-rhymes—unimportant.

Few things were very important. One did with less and less. Life persisted when all importance had left it with the pompous gesture of a fat man leaving a club—would doubtless so persist even when what little now seemed important had crept away as well. It had the trick of persisting. She wished she could lose the trick.

I am now a bad woman. Officially. Uh-huh. Well?

But men and women, most of them, were not so bad—not so bad. They were far too childish. They preserved to the end such an infantile eagerness for delight. Even at their worst they would sometimes, most unexpectedly, be kind. You could not always be blaming them, no matter how much you wanted to hate.

She must get dressed. They were going out to dinner.

The body became accustomed. Or rather, passive. As under an opiate, passive. That was lucky.

She had nearly two-thirds of the sum for the child, now, but sometimes when she put money in the bank she almost forgot the reason. She must not do that. If she kept on doing that, she might lose her mind.

The child would, probably, be stupid, graceless and vicious. Well, even so. That was something beyond her power. But opportunity for it was within her power. She could expend herself for that, perhaps, to some profit. Many people came to their ends without much profit. Leaving not much behind them. A new machine for making another machine, a stained-glass window, a public-library, a big grave on a hill. She would leave behind something mortal and living at least—a creature that laughed and wept and felt heat and cold.

A careful brittle barrier of words that she had built, as so often, against the freakish, incessant necessity, cracked to pieces.

Oh, Hugues, where are you, my dear? Oh, where are you?

She shivered and put her head in her hands. Her head felt hot and thick. She stayed this way a long time.

Come. Get up. You have to live some more.

Hugues! Hugues!

Get up.

She rose.

And yet, even now, in the middle of this noisy, arid suc-

cession of minutes and hours through which she moved on the feet of a shadow, there would come, at one time or another, awake in the night hearing a bell, or walking a commonplace street or between distasteful embraces, a moment of quietude, sober, gentle and calm. That quietude had neither reason nor logic. It rose from some forgotten spring in the heart like clear water—she could look into a still pool, down, down and down, and see there, reflected, without pain, like a pattern painted on an antique mirror, the garden and house in St. Xavier where she had lived long ago, and her own face as it had been when she was a child. Then that would depart.

The crystal filmed again—she was back in her body.

She was really looking very well to-night, considering.

4.

"But you're an *American*." The major's voice was almost querulous in its surprise.

Jean nodded. "Yes."

He looked queer.

"Must be sorta relief to talk United States once in a while," he said, with uneasy heartiness. "What parta God's country, sister?"

She considered. "Massachusetts."

"Oh-*huh*. Thought you had a sorta Boston twang."

Jean smiled to herself. He stared at her with round, interested eyes.

French girls were all immoral, of course, and you knew

where you were or weren't with most American girls. But this girl—over here—trailing round with the Frogs—it didn't seem right, somehow. He was really a little shocked. She must have had education, too—acted quite the lady. He had a generous impulse.

"Treat you right?" he said, in a hoarse whisper, his thumb jerked in the direction of Maurice Delouge.

Jean smiled. "Oh, yes—they nearly all do. Thank you."

The major applied himself to his wine.

"You just let me know if they don't, now," he continued. "A little woman like you!" He patted her hand.

Jean disliked the fatherly ones, but she was amused.

"That's certainly kind of you!" she said, with exaggerated coyness.

The major expanded. "Always treat 'em right!" he confided. "That's *my* little motto. Why they was a little girl in Pittsburgh—I'm a traveling man——"

Later in the evening he borrowed ten francs from Jean to take a taxi back to his hotel.

She saw him only once again—he was escorting a large American lady in uniform along the Rue de la Paix. They passed, he recognized her and averted his eyes.

As she was feeling sarcastic that afternoon, Jean turned and followed them, decorously, for a few blocks. He looked back, gingerly, saw her and grew very stiff. The back of his neck got redder and redder. Finally he hailed a taxi and hurried himself and his companion into it.

Jean wondered if he had to borrow that fare from the large lady.

This happened to be one of her few experiences with her compatriots during this period of her life.

5.

Letters from Blanchette about the child—pitiful letters in their crudeness, in their covetousness, in their pumped-up gratitude to the rich *Américaine*. Jean read them over with satire sitting on her shoulder like a magpie, but it was a satire that had lost its power for pain.

“The rich, kind *Américaine*—may the good God preserve her always and I have asked the saint of our village to guard her, too—and the boy needs shoes, and shoes are not to be had except at prices the most enormous——”

“He is strong as a Turk, my little wolf, he is stronger for his age than any other child in the village. Already he tries to talk and becomes so enraged that he cannot. He has black eyes—it is that that must make him often so *malin*——”

Questions to settle. “It is this that I wish to speak of, madame, to you who are always generous, of the warm heart. The lawyer has told me that the money you give to me has been invested—I know nothing of investments, a poor woman, I—and that, from now on, they will only pay me so much of it every month so that the part that is invested will not shrink and he will have the whole when he comes of age. Now is this by your wish, madame, you, the always benefi-

cent, who have saved our lives? Would it not be better to give me the whole to spend for him now? A mother should know, very surely, how to spend for her child, sometimes more, sometimes less, as the child grows. Moreover, there is much that might be bought for the farm—and myself—I do not complain, but a child's mother should not go in rags——”

Jean smiled at this, it was carefully written and with such ingenuous slyness. “Um,” she said. “Blanchette, Blanchette, my friend, you are going a little too fast!”

She dealt with the situation tactfully, but she had no idea of turning the money she meant for little Hugues either into fertilizer for his grandfather's farm or glaring provincial imitations of Paris gowns for his mother. For Blanchette did not seem to be a person of inordinate altruism or with any ideal of Mystic Motherhood, though Jean's lawyer, who had paid a surprise visit to the village at Jean's direction, assured her that much of the sum intended for the child seemed, actually, to be spent on him—at least that he looked very healthy, all things considered. With which half-satisfaction Jean had to be content.

But she read every part of Blanchette's letter that referred rather to Hugues than to her own sorrowful feelings or over-flamboyant gratitude, till the sleazy paper began to wear through at the creases—and the bank-account that was if possible to keep him from a future of cheap misery grew steadily. He would never know how she had purchased that particular release for him—that secret, as far as craft could

manage it, would be kept. She had set a certain requisite minimum of cash. After that was obtained—it might even be possible to tip the curious attendants that had served her so handily, turn in her key at the Desk and leave her present variety of damnation.

6.

The last *sou* of the minimum Jean had fixed was paid into the bank in the March of 1919, and after Jean had got the receipt, she walked out into the Avenue de l'Opera with her occupation gone. She had expected something, she did not know quite what, to happen to her the instant that the pink slip was put in her hands, some loosening of the cords that had bound her like a dog for such hungry months, some fading of the noiselike dizziness that continually possessed her mind. It was with a chilly surprise that she realized that none of these things had happened.

It was half-past eleven o'clock, Thursday, March 15th, 1919—she had looked at the calendar in the bank to make sure of it—yes, that was true. And her work was over—the work into which she had put, with fidelity and loathing and moments of clear horror, but always with interminable resolution, what of life and resolution had remained to her after Hugues Parette's death. She could leave the little room with the red-and-gold crescents now, whenever she chose—she had bought her departure from it at last, and with it what protection she could buy for Hugues's child—the price had been paid in. Now she could go away.

Over and over again she told herself these things as she walked slowly down the Boulevard towards the Madeleine. And then, suddenly, and with a certainty that was neither terrible nor grotesque but only complete, she realized that even they did not matter any more.

When she had first sent herself to market and sat down in the shut room where the dancers blew about like husks, she had cared. She had hugged herself to one purpose with all her strength, as a falling man clings to one bush on a cliff, hung over enormous gulfs. And now the support was giving, and her hands were tired. The child was safe, the child did not need her any more, she was not his mother. There was nowhere any person or thing that needed her, least of all, she thought without attitudes, herself.

She had had gifts once, and beauty like a burning flower, a pride that could have carried her through fire, children, friends, a house. These were gone now, except for some of the beauty, as utterly as if they had been swallowed by a quicksand, and with them had gone all purpose. She had made a dozen plans, this winter, of what, when she was free again, she would do with her life. She reviewed them in order, coolly. They were clever and sensibly constructed—and as worthless as detailed blueprints of a town that would never exist, for they presupposed a desire to live, and of that desire she found herself suddenly empty. Desperately she went over the plans again. What was it she had meant to do—some sort of “honest labor”? Go back, for one thing,

to things like books and music and pictures, that she had taken so little account of for so long?

Work. Work for other people. For other people's children—that might be pleasant. She grinned, painfully. Recommendations. "I can heartily recommend for a trusted position with our charities, Jean Huguenot, ex-Mrs. Shaw Ashley, divorced, up to last week a semi-prominent harlot——" Even as a nurse, as a governess, wouldn't somebody find out about her, sooner or later? The uneasy concealments, the feeling of eyes on her back all the time, cross-questions and crooked answers. She looked about her furtively, ready to run already from some indefinite pursuit. No. That wouldn't do.

Books, music, painting. A dragged woman reading cheap novels endlessly in a hotel-room. She seemed to have lived too savagely of late to find any medicine there. Travel? She grinned again.

The children of her own that she might have had, that she would not have, now.

She wondered. If she died—would she see Eve? Eve wouldn't know—Heaven was Heaven. If Eve still existed she would be in some place as nearly like it as was sensible—if she didn't it was better to be with her in the same sightless obliteration of darkness, in the same vast mouth of darkness that devoured impartially all the ragged painful knowledge and spoiled memories of the body, than hold up again for the body's sake through incessant years a flag already riddled by such various shot.

For a third time she smiled—the phrase, “a good influence” recurred to her grotesquely. That had always been the trouble, she thought, half certain, half mocking, the trouble with her and all of them, from Ricky Cotter to Hugues Parette’s son. She had influenced them all, Ricky toward the romantic, and Gabriel into reality, Shaw to be human, Eve, Hugues to be happy, the new Hugues to be safe. She had tried to bend every one of them, she thought with great lack of modesty, in amusing directions that they would never have thought of for themselves. And they had bent, for a while, and then swung back unbroken. The only thing that had been broken had been herself.

She was tired of eternally carrying about with her this self, this machinery, broken and rattling and purposeless, like the works of a spoiled watch.

All the same, by the time she got to ’Titine’s for lunch she had not fully decided.

Talk with blonde Hélène over coffee and cigarettes.

“*Cafard*, Je-an? You came in looking as if someone had painted you blue.”

“Thinking about what the use was, and deciding there wasn’t any, Hélène, I guess.”

“*Mais, que voulez vous?* One is sad, but it does not remain—after a while one is gay again—after not so long a while. *La vie est triste—bien sûr—mais grâce à Dieu elle est courte aussi!*”

“I wish it were about forty years shorter—that’s all.

Sorry to bother. Somebody said you were leaving Paris, Hélène. Really?"

"Oh, for a few weeks. To get out into the country and be—what is it?—a sportswoman. Also to see *mes gosses—mes enfants*——"

"*Vos enfants?*"

"*Mais, parfaitement. Les voilà!*"

She snaps open a small gold locket that swings from her neck on a slim chain. The faces of two little girls stare out of it, round-eyed, with proper little curls.

"Yours—really?"

"Mine and—somebody's. *Qui? Mais je ne sais pas exactement. Je crois que l'une——*"

But a discussion of problematical fathers does not interest Jean.

"They love their mother, and they know nothing—nothing—*rien du tout*," ends Hélène rather proudly. "And we have *such* fun—the darlings!"

"And you can keep working?"

"*Il faut vivre. C'est mon seul moyen. Trois ans, quatre ans, et je peux vivre sur mes rentes, peut-être. Maintenant——*"

She is happy, contented and extremely unashamed.

"I like having children," she concludes. "They are so funny—so young. Ah, *les gosses, les gosses—mes chères petites filles comme je les aime!*"

So Hélène, as well, has something to work for, some cause for life. Jean looks forward fantastically into the future—

Hélène a triply respectable widow in correct black mourning living somewhere where nobody will doubt the authenticity of her wedding ring, taking two neat, scrubbed little girls in the bridal-veils of First Communion to church. Not so fantastically, either, because it might very well come true. She congratulates Hélène politely and hopes for a pleasant stay in the country. And then she goes out of 'Titine's with nothing left in her heart or mind or body but a taste like verjuice.

7.

Jean spent most of the day in a vague lethargy, wandering about the wintry Tuileries gardens. She had dinner at a small restaurant nearby and after that sat in a café for an hour, pretending to write letters. She was quite conscious all the time that very shortly her decision would have to be made but, for once in her life, she did not weigh either side of the question. She waited in a dull sobriety for a resolution that should come wholly from within herself, untroubled by the delusions of the mind, and so be absolute—a resolution that would take as little account of the present deadly idea in her brain as of the bodily wish to continue no matter how—as the set inland of a long tide from the heart of ocean does not bother with the bicker and cross-squabbling of the waves it carries. It was nearly ten o'clock before the answer came, and when it came it was drowning as deep sleep and utterly overwhelmed her.

8.

Jean sat in the *petit salon* of her small, ornate apartment and reviewed the new plans that drowsy answer had made for her. The paper had seemed to be stuffed quite tight in the crack under the door, the door itself and all the windows shut—no gas could escape that way until it was too late for anyone to break in and find her alive. She picked up the letter in her lap and read it through again. It had resolved her last doubt, and done it with friendly satire.

"The estate of Miss Jessie Audrey, spinster," she read. "A sum of five thousand dollars"—that would be a fortune, indeed, to Hugues's son. Then she re-read the will she had made out some time before—such a simple will she felt sure that it would stand. She could not imagine why Miss Jessie had left her the money—Shaw must have been more secret than even she could have supposed about the reasons for his divorce. Or perhaps he hadn't been and Miss Jessie had felt sorry. For the last time deep, fantastic pride in her name and her race awoke in her. The Huguenots were over, but they stood by their own.

Anyhow, the reason didn't matter—in a very short time, if what Miss Jessie believed were true, she would be able to thank her for it and ask her about it. Miss Jessie would be surprised. She had a picture of that meeting and decided the most tactful words would be, "So, you see, Miss Jessie, as soon as I got your letter I thought I really ought to run over and thank you." And then Miss Jessie would say, "Why child——"

She must get to business first, though. It was nearly midnight. Slowly, trembling a little in spite of herself, she reached up and turned the gas on full. "This is the end," said a little watch that chattered and ticked in her mind. "The end—tick-tick—the end—tick-tick—the end."

Her last conscious effort before that sharp, foul smell seemed to erase all thought from her brain was an effort to recall if R. I. P. meant Rest in Peace or Remembered in Prayer, and if they would put it over her, later, on a stone. Then the sharp smell took her completely. And yet, strangely enough, as the last glint of consciousness faded, she felt quite sure that she was not going to die.

9.

The next thing Jean knew she seemed to be herself again—that is, she seemed to be alive, but diffused in a singular manner, as if the material through which she comprehended affairs was both larger and vaguer than her own familiar body. She wondered hesitatingly if she had been turned into a cloud—that was the only thing she could think of that it felt like. Then a part of herself that could not be called her eyes, for it was nothing as definite and focused as the eyes to which she had been accustomed, saw upward through the loose substance that enveloped her like fleece and yet was part of her. Earth was what it saw, at first, dark crumbles of earth, and then, as it moved a little higher, the white ends of roots—and then it was out of the earth and traveled

carefully up the stems of grass-blades, like a ladybug, until it had a sort of worm's-eye view of a long green ridge.

The ridge seemed enormous, a grassy mountain, and yet it must be of no great size, for the grass-blades had been the tall, waving forest they seem to a wandering ant, and the sight she had was small as the eye of a gnat and could not see beyond them. "It's like seeing yourself from somewhere inside near your lungs," thought Jean, interestedly, and wondered what would come next. The sight wavered for a few moments, blown about among the grass-blades like a fluffy seed. Then there seemed to be a high white wall brought suddenly before it, a wall on which tremendous letters were sculptured. The sight read them from right to left, like a Chinese book.

"ecalp nwo reh ot enog sah ehS"

That was looking-glass writing—how very odd! As far as she could Jean smiled, and the grass-blades rippled as if light wind had passed across them.

The sight moved back in the reverse direction, traveling slowly.

"She—has—gone—to—her—own—place," it read. That sounded like a text. And what business had Bible texts on a large, marble wall? The sight explored again.

"9191." Telephone number? No, of course—shouldn't read things backward. Not when one felt so large and vague.

"February 11, 1884—March 15, 1919."

That was dates. Why? Higher up.

"Jean Huguenot," and both capital letters were bright with gilt.

She *was* dead, then, and that was her tombstone. Being dead was very comfortable.

Père la Chaise? she wondered without concern. Probably not.

Her sight fluctuated again, went creeping through the grasses like a caterpillar, was stopped against something brown and round, climbed gradually. A giant shoe. A smooth sock. An end of neat, pressed trouser. Something familiar about all that—something very familiar.

The answer came unexpectedly. Shaw, of course. The grasses rippled slightly again. She should have known. Nobody but Shaw would have chosen that peculiarly ambiguous text for her grave.

And there were other shoes. An antique, small, buttoned pair with elastic sides, flawlessly blacked. Two dusty, expensive, English brogues. Two sober high black Oxfords built for hard wear, under a length of black, clerical trouser. Major Thomas Audrey. Gabriel Keene. Ricky Cotter. Was that what ministers meant by a cloud of witnesses? Ricky would probably tell her—if she could only talk.

There was one more pair of shoes—worn, commonplace boots—characterless as a private's uniform. But the cloth above them was faded horizon-blue. Jean felt herself go cold and then warm all over. Her sight strove its utmost, aching; but she could not see Hugues's face.

She felt as if she were kneeling at Hugues's side in the soft

dark of clear evening, as he had knelt at hers so often. Her whole consciousness quieted soberly like a child quieted from the heat of delight to calm peace, beneath the smooth finger of Sleep. She saw no longer but she was wholly at peace. She lay in cool peace, like dust in a lily-bud, and waited for the voices that were to deliver her judgment.

Major Audrey spoke first—she could hear the preliminary *tchk* he always gave in his throat when he wished to be impressive but gentlemanly.

“A charming little creature, Jean,” he said, and his voice had in it the youth he had lost when she had known him, like a note blown soft on a cavalry bugle. “Gentlemen of the jury.” He paused. “Excuse me, but I find myself quite unable to charge you at this particular moment. Because it is perfectly clear, to my mind at least, that one of the prisoner’s chief difficulties was—*tchk*—being born of her parents. And as a lifelong friend of the Huguenots, I cannot find it in my mind to blame her. When I knew her she was very charming.” He paused again—there was a small, sentimental noise in a silk handkerchief. “So I stand aside,” he ended.

The grasses move fugitively for an instant. She wished she could see more of Uncle Tom.

Ricky was next, and when he spoke it was with some of the diffidence he had always had, but it seemed to Jean to have changed somewhat from the shyness of immaturity into something quieter and more at ease. And yet he also appeared to have become a trifle formal.

"I tried to kill myself once for her when I was so crazy about her I couldn't see," he said. "But I didn't, and went on living. And perhaps that is why I have never been entirely afraid since then of living or dying. And because I was a fool and a boy and in love with her I can get along with fools and boys and people in love—and my congregation in general. She gave me more than she ever knew and I know a lot more than she ever intended. Well, it may be irreligious but I can't imagine any Heaven that doesn't include her. Well, I stand aside."

There was a pause after he had spoken—Jean felt that the people about him must be nudging Shaw. She expected an oration, at the least—but when he came to speech at last he made it astonishingly short.

"I apologize," he said, with a grunt, and she cherished the words like pearls inside her laughter. "Look at that stone—I bought it for her, didn't I? I apologize. I stand aside."

He had hardly finished, when Gabriel's jerky voice broke in on him angrily.

Gabriel spoke at considerable length, it seemed to Jean. He compared her to fire, to flowers, and to a number of celebrated historical characters of some of whom she had not heard. Still, if flowery he was flattering, and she liked it. Only she wished that she could quarrel with him again.

"And I stand aside because I have to," he ended, with a gesture. "But part of me will look for her long after I die."

There was silence for a while and even the grasses were still. Then Hugues's voice came, bitter as smoke.

"She loved me and I hurt her forever," it said. "She is the only one who is hurt of all us stupid animals—she who was not an animal. I loved her. I stand aside."

There was a shuffling of feet on the heels of his words and the confused noise of a crowd talking together. Jean caught only scraps of the conversation, and some of the voices were angry and some pitying and some full of moral apprehension and some devoted—but all seemed to have been moved by her, at one time or another, often without her knowledge, and to have been changed because she was, as the tides of water move and are altered by the changes of the moon. Then these vaguer voices ceased and the five men spoke antiphonally.

"There is nothing to do now," said Shaw. "But I do apologize."

"Sleep well, honey," Uncle Tom said gently.

"Beauty is dead!" cried Gabriel dramatically, and the grasses tittered somewhat and then were rather astonished by Ricky's "Now may the Peace of God——"

"Oh, Jean, Jean, Jean!" said Hugues, with a strangling cry, and then the voices were as if they had never spoken and there was nothing but the long whisper of the grass-blades talking over the funeral service.

A long time passed.

Then there was the sound of shoes again—one pair, this time. The noise of a child's feet, running.

10.

It was this last sight of herself at rest with Eve in the earth that made Jean open her eyes so unwillingly, when, after another time spent in clothy blackness, she woke, and with the waking knew that she was not part of a suitable cemetery plot but Jean Huguenot in Jean Huguenot's own body that the owner had got so very tired of, and that that body was resting, very properly, in Jean Huguenot's own bed. Still, since her attempt to change her present unsuitable flesh-and-blood habitation for one more airy and less troubled by reminiscence had, obviously, failed, she supposed that the only thing to do was to make the best of it. Besides, she felt a sneeze coming, and you couldn't play dead or comatose if you sneezed. She sat up in bed, felt sick, sneezed violently and heard someone go off into horrified French exclamations.

"*Qui là?*" she called with weak impatience. "*N'avez-vous pas peur! C'est moi, Jean.*"

A blonde, terrified head peeped over a chair at her.

"*Et c'est moi, Hélène,*" said a shaky voice. "*Mais qu'est ce que c'est, Jeanne? Qu'est-ce que c'est? Tu n'es pas morte, toi? On dit que——*"

"*Me voici!*" said Jean. "*Je vis—malheureusement. Et comme j'ai mal de tête! Pantoufles de Dieu! Est-ce——*"

Hélène must have reasoned that no well-brought-up phantom would ever have admitted headache, for she came over and sat down on Jean's bed, and in sentences broken with

"oh's" and "là là" and "alors's" and "C'est vraiment formidable's," told Jean how she and a party of friends had decided to make her a midnight call to cheer her *cafard*, pushed open the door, which Jean, ingenuously, had quite forgotten to lock, and found her "stretched out in the chair like a little dead rabbit." And then how the others, having a healthy fear of gendarmes and *procès-verbal*, had fled at once, leaving Hélène to try and bring Jean back to life as best she could.

"And that is no new thing to me, I assure you," ended Hélène, with a toss of her head. "Figure to yourself—two years ago—and a girl named Lucile and myself share an apartment—and Lucile's friend tells her, one afternoon, that this is good-by, for he is going to get married and live in Orleans. So Lucile decides—the poor child—*de ficher le camp*—and when I come back she is blue in the face and cold all over—and because of that my friend tells me good-by, too, because he fears that the habit may be catching and some time I will do the same thing when he is there—oh là, là!"

She stares at Jean. "But *why*—" she begins, and then checks herself. "That is for afterwards. For now," she says, practically, "you must restore yourself. If there were only some soup, now—but you Americans!" and she frowns and goes out exploring into the kitchen.

Jean lies back, thinking, and after a while, when she feels stronger, she laughs.

After all there is no use attempting to play "Hamlet" with

life when the gods have so obviously cast you for knock-about farce.

"Hélène," she calls, presently, "Oh Hélène! I suppose I ought to thank you for saving my life?"

"*Ne te déranges pas!*" politely, from Hélène, at work in the kitchen.

"Well, I don't know whether I do or not. But I guess I do."

"That is what they always say, sooner or later," says Hélène, philosophically. "*Bon Dieu de Bon Dieu, Jeanne*, where do you keep the bread?"

II.

Jean is out in the woods near St. Cloud, some weeks later, ruminating. The woods, though crowded enough on Saturdays and Sundays, are quiet now, except for an occasional wandering *garde-champêtre*, and green with the blurred-lace greenness of first spring. Corot trees and a soft and broken sky, streamers of thin white cloud across faltering blue, pleasant air. A chance for Jean, as she lies back against the thick trunk of a tree, to sort out her conclusions about two recent occurrences. The first happened while she was brushing her hair two nights ago, the second yesterday afternoon, and, after she had taken the first between her fingers and pulled and decided from the twinge of pain that followed that it was a white hair and not a stray thread, she looked at herself in the mirror for a long time.

Nearly all of us take our physical exteriors so much for granted that it generally requires some external circumstance from an illness to the remark of a candid friend to make us realize that they can have really changed. And Jean, since Hugues's death, had not had much time to bother about her appearance in any more intimate way than as a more-or-less valuable trade-mark. But now, as she looked intently at the semblance before her, in appreciation and critical detachment, it was almost with the eyes of a kitten seeing itself in its first looking-glass. The beauty was there still, in spite of thirty-five years and that white hair—the features were clear and not too altered—the straight nose kept its capricious pride—the neck was firm as a column—the eyes, sometimes, almost young. All was there but the elemental, intangible force—the secret of the loadstone—and that was gone.

At one time, or so Jean seemed to remember, as from a great distance, there had been that.

A restless and airy visitor had touched those features as if with a burning finger—left upon them a lustre, a perfume, a light, dazzling veil. That moment of incandescence had passed away. Her beauty, what remained of it, had settled into the repose of a picture that anyone in the world might look at and praise and pass without one glance back or any heightening of the heart. Youth had gone, and the second youth of passionately loving and being loved, gone so invisibly that Jean could not have told the instant of their departure, but gone with the finality of a wick snuffed out.

"I suppose, in five years, I won't dare wear anything but rather high black in the evening, and I'll start changing to health shoes whenever I get a chance," thought Jean, and sighed, and knew in spite of the sigh that she was not too sorry.

"I don't care. I'm glad I was beautiful. And I was beautiful."

The sudden, momentary pang of realization passed—perhaps because she knew perfectly well that she was still beautiful—after a fashion. She refused to look back at the past through the conventional mist of tears. Her beauty had been too alive for that.

No, she was not too sorry. She was glad as a king might be glad that he had held peace and war for a while in his hands like an orb, and yet, grown philosophic with long authority, feel some relief at putting them down at last. For herself her beauty had brought and taken more than she could ever count. It had given her, because it lived like light and was power, moments of ecstasy as immense and passing as the nuptials of an eagle. And it had very nearly broken her beyond redemption.

Considering the past she could not make herself hypocritical enough to be sorry for all that had happened. If she had her thirty-five years to play over again she would doubtless play them better, and perhaps cause less hurt to herself and others—but again she could not recognize those years without that particular whip of beauty to drive them—and she sighed again, but this time whimsically, as

she realized that though the individual mistakes she had made might have been exchanged for others, things would probably have come out in much the same way.

The second matter for consideration was a long, rambling letter from Blanchette. After the usual wordy prayers for Jean's safety and exclamatory overspillings of gratitude, Blanchette had come to the point in a very French, very logical, if somewhat round-about way. It appeared that there was a butcher. He lived in the next village. He had intended to marry Blanchette before Hugues's devastating appearance on the scene, though they had never been *fiancée*. *Alors*, he was a noble man. Of the noblest, the thrice noblest. For he had renewed his proposals. There had been a question of *dot*—but now all were poor, and few could cook and sew and take care of a house like Blanchette, and besides, there was a trifle left in the stocking of her father. But behold. There was another question. It was of the child, the small child.

This butcher, as the rich and gentle *Américaine* would see, was of the highest moral worthiness. But, alas, no man, not even one of the highest moral worthiness, could suffer seeing his wife bring up in his house a child that was not his own, when he knew it. The child he liked—in fact he sometimes bought it cakes. But surely, if one is to see clearly, one will see that it is impossible to ask him to take it upon himself to father such a child. A situation thus thrice formidable arises. The happiness of Blanchette, the sorrowing, and of this man, noble beyond all others,

hangs upon its solution. Cannot the rich *Américaine* who already so loves the child—for what reasons who knows, except her own sweet heart?—suggest such a solution? The child is healthy—not a one to give trouble—in all respects a most superior infant. The rich *Américaine* is childless, she has said. *Eh bien*, will not she at least, out of her generosity, come and see the child and let that poor, blighted infant and its tristful mother thank——

Here Jean, having read Blanchette much more easily than the illegible scrawl of her letter, dropped the letter and began to do sums in addition. Five thousand dollars, cash (when she got it), plus \$1255.33 yearly, plus the sum set aside for Hugues's child in francs made—what? Enough for a woman and a child to live on somewhere—England—France—America—till the woman was able to earn more? And earn more how?

She could always teach French, she supposed. Her youthful grin came back to her at the implications of such a prospect.

Besides, the child might be wholly Blanchette's—a stupid, avaricious little peasant. That, however, she managed to doubt, though she realized that the doubt was hardly logical.

She went over what practical accomplishments she had. They seemed to boil down to good, sensible housekeeper in either French or English with an extensive knowledge of rather expensive clothes.

Hugues's child. She would have to succeed if it were for Hugues's child.

Blanchette, from her letters, hardly seemed the ideal European mother. And Jean knew how to bring up children, she thought, with recollected pain. Their first years, at least, she asserted, with unusual humbleness—barring fatality. And if her thirty-five years had taught her anything it was that nearly anything was possible.

There would be no harm at all in seeing the child.

She would have to look up trains, in the morning—the place would probably be difficult to get to. She must wear her best clothes, too, if she were to act the rich *Américaine*. They would expect her to arrive in an elephantine motor—but that was asking a little too much.

Jean Huguenot, Jean Huguenot, what are you doing? Haven't you had enough queer trouble sashaying across your life? Wouldn't it be a dozen times easier for you to make a respectable citizen of yourself if you tried it alone?

And Hugues—and Hugues's child—and the fact that she would never have another child of her own.

She wondered how the French law stood on adoption. Difficult, she knew. But it could be met. Most things could be met.

There was an hour or so more of such battledore-and-shuttlecock argument for her—the fact of the child—the fact that Blanchette so obviously did not want the child pressing every reasoned objection slowly farther and farther inside their defences.

Then Jean got up and brushed the twigs from her dress, hoping the grass on which she had been lying had not

been too damp with first spring, and then realizing, a trifle sombrely, that, not so very long ago, she would not have cared if it had been as wet as a sponge if she had happened to take a fancy to lie upon it. But she started down toward the station with a certain swing. She would look at time-tables to-morrow—there certainly could be no harm in just looking at time-tables.

12.

Jean had a first-class compartment to herself most of the way from Paris to Vaucheray, trying to read, trying to look out of the window at the passing country, trying to remember just what Huguenot House was like—and all the time with wonder at herself and puzzlement at just what she was about to do making a dust-dance of indecision inside her mind.

This should be the last five minutes. Something tightened about her heart, constricting it like a bandage. Would the child be like Hugues? Would it be?

She took her bag down from the rack. She got out her vanity-case and practised a rich expression for a dozen seconds in the tiny round mirror. For a moment sheer panic obsessed her—the masquerade she had planned seemed sheerly impossible. She looked around desperately—if she wanted she could pretend she was asleep for the few moments the train stopped at the tiny station—explain to the guard that there had been a mistake—go on safe without burdens. Then she laughed at herself. No point in cowardice now.

She got out hesitatingly—there seemed to be no one to meet her on the tidy little station-platform. Then she saw.

An old peasant in his painful Sunday best, his back bent by much stooping over, his hands knotted, large, belonging to the earth, his eyes sly and healthy. Blanchette's father, she supposed.

Then Blanchette in a red skirt and a bright purple blouse that made her look like an over-blonde, over-fat penny doll, her face one covetous smile as she ran forward to Jean with both hands outstretched. And, tottering after her, rather shyly, on plump, round legs, the child, Hugues's child.

He was dressed in a horrible little suit of black plush covered with cheap lace and he would not say a word but clung to his mother; but, after the first emotional torrent of Blanchette's welcome was over and they were driving out to the farm in the joggling cart with Blanchette apologizing damply for everything in France at ten-second intervals, Jean got a chance to observe him more closely and see of what stuff he was made.

She looked at him steadily most of the time while her voice replied to Blanchette, and, at the end of the journey, her heart moved like an awakened seed with an immense relief. She might be deluding herself about him but she thought she was not. His ruddy color, she admitted, must come from Blanchette—Hugues had been swarthy—but that seemed his only apparent inheritance from her. In fact, as she kept looking at him, the fact that Blanchette had borne him seemed odder and odder.

She might always hate Blanchette a little for even bearing him. No, she couldn't. It was just. She had had her chance.

This was her child though, not Blanchette's. No, it wasn't, of course. But, that, childish, was how she felt.

Blanchette would not give him up. How could she? She had had him at her breast. Blanchette would refuse. Jean's body hurt her. She twisted her fingers together, and remarked that the countryside was charming. Were they near the farm, now?

She must be sensible. But——

She had never seen pictures of Hugues as a child but this child was Hugues from the black, soft cap of hair that fell into his eyes to the way he folded his hands, right thumb over left. The hands were the same, even to the smaller nails.

His voice was babyish and he did not know many words, but occasionally he would make a sound in so exactly the way that Hugues would have made it that again Jean felt that binding constriction about her heart. Only this time she was not afraid. She thought, simply enough, as she looked at him, sitting stiff in Blanchette's lap like a child in a stiff French print, slender without meagerness, well-built without heavy muscles or lumpish fat, that if she only had him with her to keep she would seldom be afraid again.

Blanchette took charge of the rest of the day, on her company behavior all the time, but with a determination in the very way she apologized that amused Jean greatly.

She spoke often and volubly enough of her immense affection for small Hugues and how it would tear her heart of a mother into small pieces for them to part—and seemed to regard that parting as settled a fact as to-morrow's breakfast. Moreover the caresses with which she overloaded the boy in Jean's presence seemed to cause him some ingenuous surprise, though, after looking at her once with large eyes, he gave no audible expression to his feelings from his limited vocabulary. And once, when Jean had stepped out of the room for a minute, she heard the two talking together—and Blanchette's voice had the snap of a peevish terrier's, as she scolded him with an occasional, practised slap for mussing her superb new blouse with his hands.

Nothing was settled that evening except in Jean's mind—Blanchette for all her determination was peasantly crafty enough not to hurry things from pigs to rich Americans when once they seemed to be going in the proper direction for her. And what made up Jean's mind for her forever was a very small thing.

She had been watching Blanchette put Hugues to bed with careless haste—the devoted butcher had just dropped in for a moment before going home, and she wanted to fix her hair again before she saw him. Jean noticed that as soon as the little boy was put between the covers he rolled over at once on his side and shut his eyes obediently for sleep—there was to be no nonsense of good-night kisses from Blanchette. With an impulse that was nothing but sheer hunger, and startled even herself by its abruptness, Jean

reached over to him in the great bed where he slept as close to the far side as possible, to give his mother more room. He stared at her for a moment with infantile solemnity. Then, suddenly, he smiled, rather drowsily, and his arms came up unaccustomedly and went around her neck.

Blanchette did her best to spoil it.

"Et dis merci, toi!" she said, reprovingly, when it was over. *"Merci à ton ange gardien!"*

"Merci!" piped Hugues, obediently, with a sidewise look at her hand.

Then he turned to sleep again—the smile died in a yawn, and Blanchette dragged Jean away to meet the thrice-noble butcher. But all Jean could remember through the rest of the evening was the feel of the sleepy child in her arms.

13.

Jean met the thrice-noble butcher—a rather comatose, rather gentle sort of man who looked at Blanchette with the reflective eyes of one who sees but cannot escape his fate. She liked him, and would have felt sorry for him under other conditions.

Two more things besides the growing pleasure she got from little Hugues as they began to become more acquainted, stuck in Jean's mind from the time she spent in Vaucheray, getting business matters started.

One was a casual remark dropped by Blanchette in the middle of a flood of protestation as to her eternal obligations

to Jean—a remark of the sort that the greedy often make without knowing that it betrays them.

“If you had not come,” she mused, reflectively, “I suppose we would have had to send him to Uncle Adolph at Fin-le-Bec. He has a small *buvette* there, Uncle Adolph. *Et cette vie est assez dure, vous savez—mais—*” She left the sentence hanging in the air like a raveling. “I suppose he would have been of very little use till he had gotten his growth at six or so,” she ended.

If anything further had been needed to decide Jean’s mind, this picture of a thin, cuffed and dirty Hugues tending bar in a mining town and sleeping on a pile of old bottles would have done so. From then on Jean gave frequent thanks in private for Blanchette’s covetousness for the horsy fleshpots of the *boucherie* where she would rule among frozen carcasses and her stolid carelessness of what happened to her child—for these expedited matters as nothing else could have.

The second memory was when a notary they consulted, a white-haired myopic ancient with the irritable slowness of a senile mole, asked Jean, as one of the innumerable questions to be satisfied in the preliminary inquiry, if her income were sufficient to support the addition of Hugues to her establishment.

“Let me see,” said Jean, composedly. “The dollar—that is worth about twelve francs now—*n’est-ce pas?* Well, in that case, my American income for the present year will come to—oh, about 72,000 francs. Is that satisfactory?”

Jean could not have resisted, had she wished, the triumph of that exact and truthful lie.

The notary dropped his eyelids with immense respect.

"Mais oui, madame."

And from Blanchette and the family of Blanchette, sitting stiffly on hard chairs like a row of paper-dolls being punished, came a sighing chorus, *"Mais que tous les Américains sont riches—sont riches—sont riches——"*

14.

Some time later Mrs. Jean Mabie and her small son, Hugh, are at home in their bedroom in a cheap hotel in Paris. Hugues has expanded in a number of indefinable fashions during the last month, like a plant that, for the first time in its career, has been given its proper allowance of water and sun—and now that he has become used to being dealt with pleasantly nearly all the time, he accepts the present state of affairs as he did the former one of slaps and loud voices, with the philosophy of living in the present that suits his years.

As for Jean, what little she has found disappointing in him seems to her so obviously the result of Blanchette's training that she merely devotes herself to eradicating it with the amiable persistence of an efficient laundress. Hugues has shown himself original, affectionate, sensitive, highly responsive, in the weeks they have spent together—in many ways he is absurdly like his father—to Jean he seems developing already in mind and body as few children

of her acquaintance could. This is fortunate—for she has already planned quite a number of careers for him.

She does not intend to spoil him—she thinks rather too much of him for that. And so far he has not been spoiled. On that question she takes herself, she admits, with perhaps a certain lack of humor. But she has always possessed a certain bottom of sense in dealing with such matters. On the other hand, in regard to what she can think about him as distinguished from what she actually does or says, she sometimes feels as if she had no sense at all, and is ready to admit, with candor, that it is quite a relief.

In ten minutes Hugues will have to go to bed. Meanwhile he sits opposite her, dark-eyed, intent, watching her make slim figures on a white sheet of paper. The same sum in addition—\$1255.33 a year, plus \$5000 (cash), plus that now somewhat diminished sum in francs (a certain genteel scattering of *pourboire* has been necessary)——

France or America, while Hugues is growing up—which? The obvious advantages on both sides. For France, the rate of exchange and a fair chance of paying work to do, since she knows the language so well. For America—a larger chance of better-paid work perhaps—less danger of a recurrence of the past. Anywhere it means starting in at the bottom, at thirty-five, a woman, with always that chance of unpleasant discoveries by the prying.

This last, however, Jean discounts somewhat, but not, she thinks, unreasonably. The world is very large—and she smiles as she thinks that her highly-varied experiences will

have been of pitifully little use to her indeed if she cannot dramatize from them a coherent and fairly respectable story for an outside world. And she has never been a person to run away from her own imagination. She likes the new name she has taken for both of them. Maybe, Mabie. Well—maybe—and that is all there is to be said about it.

Work—that will be difficult enough, at times. Life too. But it will never be wholly bitter or unreasonable again.

There will be some sort of a reason.

The reason is watching her just now with such intentness that her chief impulse is to get up and kiss it. But these figures must be made to say something coherent first. She sighs and turns back to them. France—England—the Sandwich Isles—America—America—France——

She has come by an intricate path to this room in a cheap hotel. She can see it winding, an involved and dubious track, like a river in a madman's map, through incredible countries, through forests dark as a raven, through cities strangely commonplace in their brisk and useless stir. Broken statues of gods and demons stand by the way, but she does not look back at them. She has reached a certain maturity, after the passage of youth and mortal desire.

There are jewels lost on the journey—gold coins with the head of a man upon them, ornaments of beauty or wonder, marvelous things. Lost dogs and muddy shoes. Forsaken baggage, in general. And that is that, she thinks, dispassionately. There is a certain refreshing singularity in living without decorations.

Her apprenticeship to the mechanism of human existence is over. After many vagaries, the material stuff of life itself, the stuff by the shaping of which she must live or die in the eyes of her own judgment, has been given her at last, like clay to a child. The next twenty years at least must go to that shaping—that sculptural occupation, pursued with delight and pain and anger to the extremity of her force. Pursued likewise with an incessant fear of her own incapacity and an inflexible rejection of comfortable defeat, for that cause or any other. She smiles—the way to her employment has been long and eccentric, but she has reached it now, and the way itself and the curiosities upon it count for less in this present balance than the idle, hesitating patterns a wind without rest or purpose draws on the sand.

No new life—as the fiction of her case would have it—has opened suddenly before her like a pasteboard rose. She feels no abrupt accolade of spiritual nobility—no sudden access of artificial youth. She is a woman in the middle thirties, older in many ways than most women of her age, and at times very tired, desirous frequently of nothing more exciting than a comfortable chair. Her mind may remain romantic, but her body has lost its power over that mind.

But now she can accept life and employ it. She supposes it more or less boils down to that. At any rate, at the moment, she knows what she is living *for*.

She does not think all this consciously, in set words, as

she scribbles, but "Perhaps I've found the nigger in the woodpile" she thinks. A *chevaux-de-frise* of spiked boughs to pull away and there, at last, at the very bottom, farcically, superbly concealed, the nigger. Black as a crow. She laughs.

And then, possibly because she feels a little self-conscious still with her own maturity, she suddenly does a very youthful thing. Her paper is covered with calculations that lead nowhere. She stares at them, hearing Uncle Tom's voice in her ears. "Well, Jean, whenever I get all frazzled up about doing one thing or another, and know I have to do one of them right soon—I always found the best thing to do was to flip a penny."

She rummages in her bag—yes, there is a two-sou piece there—a coin of Napoleon III with eagle and head worn flat by decades of handling.

She holds it up in the air before Hugues's eyes that grow round on the instant. It glints bronzily in the diminishing evening light, little and full of destiny. She turns it slowly.

"*Attends, Hugues! Celui-ci!*" she looks doubtfully at the eagle. "*C'est l'Amérique. Celui-là,*" she points at the dim head with the short goatee, "*c'est la France. Nous allons voir.*"

Hugues nods comprehendingly. "*C'est entendu, maman,*" he says, then with his precise little accent, Hugues's accent, "all right, mother."

Jean hesitates, feeling that some sort of preliminary re-

ligious ceremony should be in order before such an important entrusting of themselves to Chance. But all she can think of is "maybe" and "Maybe. Let's go!" she says, with a courteous air. Then she flips the coin up at the ceiling.

It spins for a moment as it falls, a dull, twinkling spot, strikes on its side, runs along till it meets a hummock of table-cloth, turns over, lies quiet.

"*Bien fait!*" says Hugues with a chuckle, and goes around to be lifted into Jean's lap. The two heads are close together as they stare at the fallen coin.

THE END.

